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# FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

## STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

### FACING THE WORLD; OR, A POOR BOY'S FIGHT FOR FORTUNE.

By A SELF-MADE MAN



While two of the tramps busied themselves emptying Joe Benton's valise, the thin ruffian compelled the boy to exchange clothes with him, and the stout rascal appropriated his derby. "Now skip!" cried the latter menacingly, pointing down the road.



# Fame and Fortune Weekly

## STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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# Facing the World

OR,

## A POOR BOY'S FIGHT FOR FORTUNE

By A SELF-MADE MAN

### CHAPTER I.

#### IN THE SHADOW OF THE RUM BOTTLE.

"So your mother is worse, eh?" said Tom Waldron, sympathetically. "I feel dead sorry for you, Joe."

"It isn't more than I've expected," replied Joe, with a sob in his voice, though his eyes were dry, and shone with a feverish light that betokened loss of sleep. "Mother isn't made of cast iron. There's a limit to everything, and she's reached hers at last."

"Do you think she's going to die?"

"I do," replied Joe, in a tone of conviction.

"It's too bad," replied Tom.

"I don't know," answered the other. "She'll be better off dead. If there's a bright world beyond the skies, that I've heard the minister speak about, she'll go there, and be happy. I hate to lose her," choking up and turning his face away, "but why should she linger on and suffer? Nobody knows what she has gone through but herself and—me. I've heard her talk at night, and cry out, while I sat by the bed, and what she said was enough to drive me mad—mad, do you understand, Tom Waldron?" And the speaker grabbed his companion by the arm with a grip that made the other wince.

"Doesn't your father understand how things are going?" asked Tom.

"Don't mention him. I don't know whether he does or not. At any rate, he doesn't seem to care. He's drunk three-quarters of the time. In fact, he's never wholly sober at any time."

"Drink is a terrible thing, Joe."

"It's a curse!" cried the other, vehemently. "It's made a brute and a wreck of my father, and paupers of mother and me. It has brought mother to the grave, for she can't last much longer. Once my father was as industrious and respectable as any man in the county. Now look at him—a common sot, and a reproach not only to his family but the village as well."

Tom Waldron nodded.

He knew the facts of the sad case only too well.

Everybody in Glenwood knew them, and sympathized, after a fashion, with poor Mrs. Benton and the bright boy who was her sole support and consolation in her hour of trouble.

A few of the villagers, whose hearts were really touched by the desperate plight of the unfortunate woman and her son, went out of their way to assist them. The others, and they were largely in the majority, contented themselves with expressing their sentiments by word of mouth when they met at the sewing circles and other social gatherings.

They appeared to feel sorry for Mrs. Benton; no doubt they honestly were, but their sorrow never took practical shape.

The drunkard's wife was so far down the social scale that they could not think of visiting the poor hovel where she lived.

It hurt their feelings to think of coming into contact with such a person.

They might contract some disease, they argued, or soil their clothes.



They shuddered when they thought of the unfortunate woman, and thanked the good Lord that they were not like her.

They opened their purses to the missionary fund, but forgot that poor Mrs. Benton needed money and human sympathy more than the Hottentots of South Africa, or the savages of the South Sea Islands.

"I've heard it said that Ike Horton is the cause of your father's ruin," said Tom Waldron.

"Then you've heard the truth."

"He tempted your father to drink."

"He did."

"He encouraged him to idle away his time at the tavern."

"That's true."

"And when your father became a slave to the bottle Ike disappeared from the village."

"So he did."

"The man acted like a scoundrel."

"Yes. If he isn't dead, he may get all that's coming to him yet."

"I hope he will. He deserves to be handled without gloves."

"That won't make my father a sober and honorable man again, nor will it bring back the wasted happiness of mother's life, or save her from a pauper's grave."

"Ike Horton must have had a reason for acting as he did. Do you know what it was?"

"I can guess. His reason was revenge."

"Revenge!" exclaimed Tom, in some surprise.

"Yes. He and father both wanted to marry mother. She chose my father. I have since heard that Ike Horton swore to get square with them both."

"If he did he has kept his word."

"Like a coward and cur, not like a man. He worked in the dark, like a snake in the grass. His friendship for father and mother was a pretence to cover his designs. Mother woke up to the true state of things when it was too late. Then she warned father, and did everything she could to save him and herself from the fate the rascal had marked out for them. But he had his hooks in, and you see the result."

"Can I do anything for you, Joe? If I can, I'll be glad to help you out," said Tom.

"I don't know that you can, just now."

"You look tired and played out. Is there any one with your mother?"

"Yes. Widow Cameron. She's done a whole lot for us, off and on. She deserves a gold medal. Well, I must get on with this medicine the doctor ordered for mother. He's another good chap. He knows we can't pay him, but he told me that didn't make any difference. He says money isn't everything in this world."

"It may not be everything, but it cuts a mighty big figure just the same," replied Tom. "Well, so long. I'll call over and see you after supper."

"All right. I'll look for you."

Thus speaking, Joe Benton continued on up the road, while Tom turned into a lane which led to a small but well-kept farm.

We will follow Joe.

He was an intelligent-looking, sturdy boy, with a frank,

open countenance that attracted one to him, in spite of his apparel, which showed the pinch of poverty.

He had been born and raised in the village of Glenwood, in the western part of New York State, and had obtained a fair education at the district school.

When his father, who had once been a prosperous carpenter, became a loafer and an inebriate, the support of the family devolved on him.

He obtained work during the season at the different farms in the neighborhood, and was well liked because of his industrious habits.

His young hands kept the wolf from the door, and things might have gone fairly well with him and his mother but for the conduct of his father, as the man sank lower and lower in the human scale.

A goodly portion of the money Joe turned in to his mother was taken from her through the intimidating tactics of her worthless husband, and went to swell the profits of the proprietor of the tavern and roadhouse on the outskirts of the village.

It was some time before Joe got on to this fact.

He wondered where his father got the coin to pay for all the liquor he drank.

When the truth came out he was greatly discouraged over the outlook.

Before he had decided what course to adopt, so as to cut off his father's source of revenue, his mother took a severe cold, which developed into hasty consumption, and the good-hearted doctor who volunteered to attend her free of charge saw that she was doomed, and broke the news as gently as he could to the boy.

The condition of Mrs. Benton did not awaken any sense of remorse in the breast of her husband.

He treated her, if anything, worse than before, because he could not get any money from her.

The tavern keeper, however, trusted him, on the strength of his statement that his wife being ill he couldn't get any money till she got better.

It was his habit to stay at the barroom all the afternoon, and as far into the night as he was permitted, and then return home, to raise Cain generally and sleep off the effects of his booze.

After parting from Tom Waldron, Joe walked up the road a little way till he came to the poor-looking cottage that he called home.

It stood close by the road, with a small piece of ground, once a pretty garden, in front, and a much larger piece of ground, on which stood a couple of ruinous outbuildings, in the rear.

A hen or two, with a brood of newly hatched chicks, wandered around the forlorn-looking yard, and were the only signs of life visible about the place.

All the rest of the live stock had been carried off and sold by the dissolute Benton, and their acquisition, at bargain rates, was not much to the credit of the persons who bought them, and thus encouraged the man's worst propensities at the expense of his unfortunate wife and son.

The place would have worn a much more wretched look but for the efforts of Joe to keep the weeds down and the yard as neat as possible.

The interior of the cottage would have gone to rack and ruin only for the industrious labor of Mrs. Benton.



The poor woman was now no longer able to attend to the place, and never would again, and her two weeks' spell in bed showed itself in many ways throughout the house.

Everything was turned topsy turvy in the kitchen, sitting-room, and the small bedroom occupied by her husband, for William Benton never failed to make his presence felt around the house when he was not snoring away in bed like an overfed pig.

He and Joe had many a scrap, out of some of which the boy narrowly escaped with his life, for Benton, Senior, was dangerous when the demon rum had him well under control.

## CHAPTER II.

### A DRUNKARD'S REVENGE.

The sun was sinking behind the hills in the west, gilding the kitchen windows with its golden radiance, when Joe opened the gate and let himself into the front yard.

He walked around to the kitchen door and entered the cottage.

A pot of chicken broth was simmering on the stove, but there was no one in the room, which had been tidied up a bit since the boy went to the village.

Joe walked softly upstairs, for he did not wish to disturb his mother, who might be asleep.

The good-hearted Widow Cameron was seated by the window overlooking the road.

She had noted Joe's arrival, and heard his steps on the stairs.

"How's mother?" he whispered.

"About the same, Joe," replied the widow, with a sad look.

"Do you think she'll live through the night?"

"Why, Joe!—you don't expect her to die as soon as that, do you?" she said, in a shocked voice.

"I don't know," replied the boy, despondently. "The doctor hasn't any hopes. He told me that she might go off any time, like the snuffing out of a candle, especially if anything should happen to excite her."

"What should happen——" began the widow, and then she stopped.

The question was superfluous under the circumstances of the case.

Anything might happen when William Benton came home with a jag on.

In his wife's weakened and nervous condition an outburst on his part might sap her little remaining vitality.

"Father might——" began Joe, in reply to her half-formed remark.

"Yes, I know," interrupted the Widow Cameron. "Don't let us talk about it."

"Joe! Is that you?" came a weak voice from the bed.

"Yes, mother. I have brought the medicine."

"Thank you, dear. You're a good boy, Joe."

"You had better take some of it now. Will you give it to her, Mrs. Cameron? The directions are on the bottle."

The widow took the package from Joe, opened it, and read the directions.

It was to be taken in some water, and so the good woman went downstairs to get a glass and prepare the medicine for the patient.

"How do you feel, mother?" asked Joe, when alone with his parent.

"I feel very weak and listless. I have scarcely any pain now. I'm afraid that is a bad sign. It means that I shall not be long with you, Joe."

"Mother!" said the boy, controlling his voice by a strong effort.

"It is hard to leave you, my poor child, but perhaps it is for the best. Heaven's will be done. I know I am dying, so why try to keep the fact from you? I want you to promise me one thing."

"I promise, mother, no matter what it is," said Joe solemnly.

"Promise me, Joe, on your knees, beside your mother's death-bed, that you never will touch strong drink."

"I promise you, mother," said the boy, kneeling down. "I never intended to, anyway. It has been father's ruin, but it never shall be mine—I swear it!"

"I believe you, Joe, and I shall die happy knowing that you, at least, will not become a victim of the rum bottle."

Nothing more was said, as the Widow Cameron entered with the medicine, which she administered to the sick woman.

Half an hour later she fed her some of the broth.

When it began to grow dark she took her leave, promising to call in the morning.

Joe was left alone with his mother, who dozed off to sleep.

The boy then went down to the kitchen, prepared a frugal supper for himself, and ate it.

Returning to the chamber above, he sat by the window, looking out into the night, and wondering what he should do when his mother was no longer with him.

His thoughts toward his father were very bitter.

His mother's approaching death he laid at his door.

He was determined on one thing—when his mother's life went out he would cut loose entirely from his father.

At that moment he didn't care if he ever saw his father again.

The slam of the front gate aroused him from his sad reverie.

"That's Tom," he said to himself. "I will go down and meet him."

Waldron was knocking on the kitchen door when Joe drew the bolt and admitted him.

"How's your mother?" asked Tom.

"The same."

"Here's some jelly and things mother sent over," said Tom, placing a package on the table.

"Thanks," replied Joe, gratefully. "Your mother is very kind to remember us."

"She'll be over herself, to-morrow, to see if she can be of any help."

"I am very much obliged to her. She had better not come till the afternoon, as my father may wake up and make things disagreeable in the forenoon."

"All right. I'll tell her," replied Tom.

"Wait a minute, till I slip upstairs and see if mother is still asleep."

Joe found that she was sleeping calmly, like a tired child, and returned to the kitchen, where he and Tom talked for some time together.



Finally Waldron took his leave, and Joe returned to his lonely vigil in the bedroom.

The hours passed slowly away, and the sick woman slept peacefully through them, while the lonely boy sat and gazed through the window into the obscurity without.

He was not trying to see into the darkness.

He was thinking—dreaming of what the future had in store for him.

Gradually his heavy eyes closed, in spite of his efforts to keep awake, his head fell over on his arm, and he slept.

At length midnight approached, and down the road reeled the figure of a man.

This man was William Benton.

Drunk, as usual, but in an uglier humor than ordinarily, for the tavern keeper, after a scrap with him, had ejected him into the road, and told him not to come back there any more, or he'd have him put in the lock-up as a vagrant and common lush.

Benton, after shaking his fist at the man who had practically made him what he was, and muttering dark threats of revenge, started for the only place left him to go—the home he had wrecked.

Drunk as he was, he knew how to get there.

After two or three falls he came in sight of the cottage.

"There's a light (hic) in the window for me," he caroled. "I wonder if the old (hic) woman is waitin' up to let me in? For he's a jolly good fel—no he isn't! He kicked me out to-night. Threw me into the road like a bum. After all the money I've spent at his place. I'll fix him for it. I'll get (hic) square, or my name's not Bill Benton. I'll set fire to his blamed old house. I won't go home to-night till I have revenge. I'll go back. No man shall throw (hic) me into the road like a bum. I won't stand it."

William Benton turned around and began to retrace his unsteady steps.

The fumes of the liquor fired his brain and gave him such an exaggerated idea of the treatment he had received at the hands of the tavern keeper that he was ready for any desperate project.

As he drew near the tavern again, now closed tight, and dark within and without, he seemed to grow more steady and resolute.

He had but one idea in his head, and that was to set the building on fire.

Unfortunately, he was so well acquainted with the place that he readily picked out its most vulnerable part—an opening under the front porch, through which he crawled.

Here the boards forming the top of the cellar were rotten and punky from age.

He tore several away, with little noise, for they seemed to crumble under his grasp.

Then he lowered himself into the cellar.

Lighting a match, he looked around.

There were empty boxes, filled with excelsior, lying around, and several barrels containing spirits, in one of which stood a tin funnel, thrust into the bung-hole.

The drunkard took a lantern from a nail in a beam and lighted it.

Then he placed all the boxes containing excelsior together in a heap, and saturated them with spirit drawn from one of the barrels.

He was foxy enough to place a barrel under the hole by which he had entered the cellar, so he could crawl out easily after he had lighted the inflammable material.

Making sure that everything was ready for the blaze, he opened the door of the lantern, took out the candle, and placed it in the under box of the pile.

In a moment the excelsior was on fire.

Dropping the lantern, he hastily crawled out of the cellar, and, taking to the road, walked away in a pretty steady manner, as compared with his movements after having been ejected from the tavern.

### CHAPTER III.

#### CRIME AND DEATH.

While William Benton was executing his incendiary job his son Joe and his wife were asleep in the room overlooking the road.

Suddenly Mrs. Benton woke up, with a frightened cry on her lips, that aroused Joe in an instant.

"Mother," he said, going to her, "did you call me?"

Then he noticed the look of terror on her countenance and the excited state she was in.

"Why, mother!—what is the matter?"

"Your father!" she gasped.

Joe looked around the room, expecting to see him there, though the doors below were locked and the windows secure.

He soon saw that there was no one in the room but themselves.

"What about father?" he asked. "He has not come home yet."

"I know it," faltered the poor woman.

"Then why did you mention his name?"

"Oh, Joe! Joe!—I've had a terrible dream about your father!"

"A terrible dream, mother?"

"Yes! yes! I dreamed he committed a fearful crime!"

"A crime!"

"I saw him as plain as I see you now, in a cellar under some building. There were barrels of liquor there, and boxes filled with some kind of white stuff, like shavings. Your father piled the boxes up, and then set fire to them. There was an awful look of satisfaction on his face, as if he was taking revenge on some one. Oh, Joe! what can it mean? Do you think——"

She broke off with a scream.

"Look, Joe!—look!—a fire! See the blaze through the trees! It is just as I saw it in my dream, after your father had started it!"

Joe turned and looked out of the window.

Sure enough, there was a fire, that was growing brighter every minute, in the direction of the village.

The coincidence of his mother's dream and this fire startled him.

"Joe, your father started that fire! I know—I feel it!"

"Nonsense, mother! Father may be a drunkard, but he is not a criminal!"

The poor woman only wrung her hands, beating the air in a paroxysm of excitement that was pitiful to see.

What she had seen in her dream was too real to be disregarded by her.



Bad as her husband had been, she had never known him to do anything that would bring him within the strong arm of the law, but now she was certain that he had committed a great crime, and the knowledge stirred her gentle nature to its depths.

Joe tried his best to calm her, but she would not be quiet until she collapsed from utter exhaustion.

And while he strove with her the fire grew brighter and brighter, until the sky glowed with carmine.

The flames rose high above the trees, and the distant jingle of the one hand fire engine the village owned came faintly to the boy's ears on the early morning breeze.

His own nerves tingled with excitement as the fire cast its ruddy reflection into the room, and had his mother been well he would have been among the first on the ground, to witness the conflagration at close quarters.

Joe induced his mother to take her medicine, and after a time she grew quiet and dozed off to sleep again.

Then the boy watched the fire from the window until it gradually died away.

"That was close enough to be the tavern," he muttered. "It would be a good thing if the place was destroyed. Why was it not wiped out three years ago, when father first started to go there? Only for that tavern father might have been a respectable man to-day, and mother——"

His voice faltered, and he said no more.

Looking at the clock, he saw that it was two in the morning.

Joe wondered where his father could be keeping himself at that hour.

Not at the tavern, for that closed between eleven and midnight.

Then where could he be?

Never, to Joe's knowledge, had he remained out so late before.

Although he didn't care much if his father remained away all night, still the strangeness of his absence made him a bit uneasy.

He walked downstairs and out to the gate facing the road.

The road, as far as he could see, was silent and deserted.

So he gave the matter up and returned to the bedroom.

He watched his mother for a while, and finally dropped off asleep.

The sun, shining through the window, awoke him.

He was astonished to think that he had slept so long.

He looked at his mother.

She still seemed to be sleeping quietly, so he went downstairs, lighted a fire in the stove, and made some breakfast for himself.

After eating it he walked outside and looked up and down the road, but there was nothing to indicate that his father was in the neighborhood.

He stood a while, leaning on the gate, drinking in the cool morning air. Then he saw Tom Waldron coming up the road.

"Where was the fire last night, Tom? I saw it from the window of mother's room."

"That was Ralston's tavern. It was completely destroyed early this morning, and the owner and his family only escaped by the skin of their teeth."

"That so? Did you learn how the fire occurred?"

"Constable Black has a strong suspicion that some one set the place on fire."

"How?"

"By forcing an entrance into the cellar from the front."

"What reason has he for thinking so?"

"There are a number of suspicious circumstances that have come to light during the investigation which began a short time ago. There is no doubt whatever that the blaze started in the cellar. From a pile of burned fragments of boxes, all in one place, where they shouldn't have been, according to Ralston's statement, as well as the charred remains of a barrel at a point where no barrel was when Ralston looked into the cellar before turning in for the night, together with the position in which the remnants of the lantern were found, the opinion is freely passed around that the fire was clearly of incendiary origin."

While Tom was speaking Joe suddenly remembered his mother's dream about his father piling boxes filled with shavings up in a cellar and setting them on fire.

This remarkable vision, added to the fact of his father's prolonged absence, and the apparently incendiary origin of the tavern fire, made the boy feel decidedly uneasy.

He could not bring himself to believe that his father was really guilty of the crime of destroying the roadhouse, but, nevertheless, things looked suspicious.

He asked Tom many questions about the fire, and his friend gave him all the particulars he had been able to obtain.

Joe did not dare ask Tom whether he had seen or heard anything about his father, lest his questions might ultimately arouse suspicion against his disreputable parent.

After Tom had said all he had to say he told Joe that he couldn't stay any longer, and started off for his home.

He had hardly gone before a man came slouching out of the bushes and approached the gate.

His bloodshot eyes, uncertain gait, and wretched appearance betokened the slave of intemperance.

Joe recognized him at once as his father.

"Let me in," said the man, hoarsely, with a furtive, almost frightened, look over his shoulder, as if he thought some one was coming up on him from behind. "Let me in—d'ye hear!"

Joe opened the gate, and his father pushed roughly past him and made for the house.

Suddenly he stopped and turned around.

He saw his son's eyes following him.

He walked back in a savage and threatening way.

"If anybody comes here lookin' for me, tell 'em I'm in bed," he snarled. "Tell 'em I've been home all night, d'ye understand?"

"Where have you been, father?" asked the boy.

"None of your blamed business where I've been!" cried William Benton, savagely. "You do as I tell you! Don't you dare say I didn't come home till mornin'! If you do, I'll kill you!"

The look that accompanied the words was almost murderous, and greatly disturbed Joe.

He had never known his father to be quite so ugly after sleeping off a good bit of his nightly debauch.

Evidently there was something unusual the matter with



him, and Joe's suspicions of his father's guilt began to grow.

He decided to tell him about the fire, to see how he'd take it.

It took a lot of nerve for him to broach the subject, under the circumstances, but Joe was a plucky boy.

"Father," he said, looking him straight in the eye, "do you know that Ralston's tavern was burned to the ground early this morning?"

William Benton glared at his son with the eyes of a wild beast at bay.

"It's a lie!" he shouted hoarsely. "I know nothin' about it! Who says it was burned?"

"I say so."

"You infernal little imp!" roared his father. "Do you accuse me of settin' fire to it?"

He seized Joe by the throat with a grip that choked the boy.

"Take it back! Take it back—d'ye hear?—or I'll murder you!"

Joe, by a desperate struggle, succeeded in freeing his neck from his infuriated father's grasp.

"Leave me alone, will you?" he said, doggedly. "I did not say that you set fire to the place. I said it was burned down."

"But your eyes accuse me. You believe I did it. I know you do. If you give me away I'll be the death of you!"

"If you say you didn't do it, I s'pose you didn't," replied Joe, holding himself in readiness to avoid another attack.

"I didn't do it!—nobody saw me do it! It's a lie! I was home all night—all night, d'ye understand? Don't you dare tell any one I wasn't, or——"

His passion choked further utterance, and he stood and glared at his son like a wild beast.

"If you say you were home all night nobody shall learn anything different from me, whether you set fire to the tavern or not," replied the boy. "You are my father, whether you are guilty or not, and no act of mine shall bring a crime home to you. Go to bed, for you look as if you needed rest. If any one sees you standing here, with that look on your face, it may cause suspicion to rest on you. Go into the house right away, and then maybe I'll be able to forget that I've seen you this morning."

His father seemed to grasp the meaning of his words, for with another furtive look up and down the deserted road he turned sullenly away and started for the house.

Joe watched him disappear around the corner of the house.

Then he followed in a dejected way.

"My father is a criminal! Yes, his words and actions proclaim his guilt. He set the tavern on fire, just as mother dreamed he did. There isn't the least doubt in my mind about it. This is the last straw that makes our misery complete. Thank Heaven, murder was not a part of his desperate action. Why did he do it? What motive urged him to the commission of such a terrible act? Was it simply because his mind was crazed by liquor, and he did not know what he was doing? What a curse drink is! It is the father of all crime. Poor mother! If you

knew how low father has now fallen you would not survive the terrible shock."

He entered the house and softly walked upstairs.

His father was not in sight.

He tiptoed to the bedside, where his mother lay, silent and motionless.

One look at her white face, staring eyes, and fallen jaw, told him the truth.

With a cry of grief and despair he threw his arms about her.

"Mother! mother! Speak to me! No! no!—she cannot!—she is dead—dead!"

He slipped to the floor, and, with his extended arms across his mother's body, he wept as if his heart would break.

And there he was found, an hour later, by Widow Cameron, when she came over to see the patient, as she had promised to do.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### TEACHING A BULLY A LESSON.

The tavern fire created a good deal of excitement in the village, especially when it became known that it was thought to be of incendiary origin.

The question which then agitated the people was who could have done the deed.

As soon as Ralston became satisfied that somebody had fired his building his suspicions pointed to William Benton.

Benton had threatened him the night before, and, putting two and two together, the tavern keeper applied to the justice for a warrant against the suspect.

The head constable was sent to serve it, and he drove out to the Benton cottage on the county road to find the person he was after.

When he arrived there a silence hung over the cottage, and he soon learned of the death of Mrs. Benton from the Widow Cameron.

Being a man of feeling, he decided that, under the circumstances, he would postpone serving the warrant, so he drove back into the village and announced the death of the drunkard's wife.

Ralston made a stiff kick because the constable had failed to do his duty.

"The man won't run away, I guess," replied Constable Jones, stiffly. "Besides, you have no direct evidence against him, and I don't think that, in view of the death of his wife, the warrant ought to be served until after the funeral. It would be hardly Christianlike."

"You have no right to let your private feelings interfere with the execution of your duty," answered Ralston, angrily. "I'm sure Benton is the person who fired my house, and if you don't go right back and arrest him I'll see the justice about the matter."

"I won't arrest him to-day, at any rate," replied the constable. "If you don't like the way I do business you can call on Justice Cox and make your complaint."

Constable Jones turned on his heel and went to the office of the justice, where he explained why he had not served the warrant.

While he was there Ralston came in and had his say on the subject.



The justice settled the matter by telling the constable that it was up to him.

If the suspect skipped the village, he would hold the officer responsible; otherwise, he didn't see that any harm would be done by deferring the arrest.

Ralston, who was mighty mad over the destruction of his property, as well as the loss of the profits because his business had been brought to a standstill, went away with a grouch on, and began to spread the news broadcast of how badly he was being treated.

This naturally prejudiced the village against William Benton, and caused the impression to prevail that he was the incendiary.

When the constable learned of Ralston's tactics he was much incensed.

He found that it would be necessary to set a watch on Benton's movements, since, if he was guilty, and he learned that he was to be arrested, he probably would seek to leave the neighborhood.

After his first burst of grief, Joe Benton left his dead mother to the kind offices of Widow Cameron and other sympathetic women, and walked off into the woods, to hide his sorrow from public notice.

He sat down on a fallen tree and buried his face in his hands.

He had not been there very long before Job Ralston, son of the tavern keeper, who was very like his father in disposition and character, came along with a crony of his.

They were on their way to inspect some rabbit traps, and find out what luck was in store for them that morning.

For some reason, known only to himself, Job Ralston hated Joe Benton.

It might have been because the boy was popular in the neighborhood while he was just the reverse.

The fact that he, the son of a well-to-do tavern keeper, was at a discount alongside of Joe, the drunkard's son, probably had a good deal to do with the matter.

At any rate, he never failed to assume an offensive attitude whenever he met the object of his aversion.

Joe, for fear that his father might suffer at the hands of the tavern keeper if he resented Job's mean tactics, forbore to get into a scrap with him, though he felt abundantly able to polish off the tavern keeper's son if he chose to bring matters to an issue.

On this occasion Job was more than ever incensed against Joe because of his conviction, acquired from his father, that William Benton was the cause of the destruction of the tavern.

The knowledge of the recent death of Joe's mother did not excite a grain of sympathy in his breast.

He despised the whole Benton family—Joe worst of all. "Hello!" said Sam Parker, Job's companion. "Who's that sittin' on that log?"

Job's sharp, ferret-like eyes recognized Joe at once.

"It's that beast of a Joe Benton," he snarled.

"What is he doin' on that log? Looks as if somethin' was wrong with him."

"Oh, I s'pose he's moonin' over his old woman's death. It's a good thing she did turn up her toes. It saves the county the expense of supportin' her, for she was bound to reach the poorhouse some time, if she'd lived," he said, heartlessly.

"It wouldn't have been her fault if she had," said Sam, who had some feeling.

"What difference does it make whose fault it was? She died just in time, for Bill Benton will be sent to State prison for burnin' our place down, and this lobster will have to leave the village, for nobody will hire the son of a jail-bird. Ain't I glad of that! I hate the little beast!"

"Well, come on! Let's hurry over to the traps," said Sam, manifestly impatient to find out if any game had been snared overnight.

Job, however, seemed to forget that he had been in an equal hurry himself a few minutes before.

The sight of the unhappy-looking Joe was an attraction he couldn't resist.

He was in a bullying humor, and he considered the drunkard's son a fit subject to practice on.

Being a coward as well, prudence suggested that he get hold of a stick to use in case Joe should happen to show fight.

So he looked around for one, and, as the woods were full of suitable saplings, he soon had a weapon in his hand.

Then he opened proceedings.

"Hello, Joe Benton! What are you sniveling about?" he said, offensively, while a satisfied grin rested on his sandy, pock-marked features.

At the sound of his voice Joe looked up quickly.

It was the first intimation he had that he was no longer alone.

He looked at the two boys, but made no reply, and waited for them to go on.

"Come on, Job!" said Sam. "What's the use of wasting time with him? I've got to get back to the store some time to-day."

Sam's father kept the general store, and Sam acted as general clerk and delivery boy.

Job paid no attention to his companion's request, but stood and glowered at Joe.

"So your old woman's dead, is she?" he said, sneeringly. "I s'pose the village will have to stand the expense of plantin' her. That's the worst of havin' paupers around. They're a blamed nuisance, the whole brood of 'em."

The words were hardly out of the bully's mouth before Joe was on his feet, facing him, with clenched fists and a look of suppressed fury blazing in his eyes.

"How dare you talk that way about my mother, Job Ralston!" he cried, in a voice that trembled with wrath.

The young rascal, though he had a stick in his hand, recoiled a step or two, as if afraid Joe would strike him.

"Ho! Ain't we mad all of a sudden!" he replied, jeeringly.

"You go on where you're bound, and leave me alone," answered Joe. "I'm in no humor to be tantalized."

"Who you givin' orders to, you lobster?" snorted Job. "I'll go on when I feel like it. The idea of a feller like you givin' me back talk! A feller whose father is a crook——"

Smash!

The word was hovering on his lips when Joe sprang at him like a wildcat and struck him in the jaw with a force that knocked him down.

"You lying cur!" cried the infuriated lad, standing over



him in an aggressive way. "My father is no more a crook than your father is!"

"Sam! Sam!" called Job, in a whining tone, for he was thoroughly alarmed at Joe's attitude. "Help me out! Slug him—quick!"

Sam was not anxious to mix himself up in a scrap in which he had no special interest, especially as Joe looked exceedingly dangerous, so he failed to respond to Job's appeal.

Job, finding that he could expect no aid from his companion, dragged himself back a yard, and then scrambled to his feet, looking particularly vindictive.

"I'll get square with you for that!" he snarled, "and I'll tell my father you said he was a crook!"

"I didn't say he was a crook. I said my father was no more a crook than your father is. That's what I said, and I mean it, too."

"What else is your old man, when he set fire to my father's tavern, and will go to State prison for it, see if he doesn't?"

"Who says he set fire to the tavern?" demanded Joe.

"Everybody says so."

"That's a lie! Who saw him do it?"

"He took precious good care that no one seen him, but he done it, just the same."

"If no one saw him do the deed, then there is no evidence against him, and nobody has any right to accuse him of such a crime."

"There is evidence against him."

"What is it?" asked Joe, with a sinking heart.

"You'll find out when he's arrested."

"Who's going to arrest him?"

"Constable Jones, of course, if he ain't done it already."

"It would be an outrage to arrest him on a trumped-up charge, with my mother lying dead in the house!"

"What difference does that make? You ought to be glad she's passed in her chips, for she'd only go on the county, like any other pauper," sneered Job.

"Take care, Job Ralston!" cried Joe, advancing on him again. "If I go for you again I'll pound the life out of you!"

"Don't you touch me!" said Job, retreating. "If you do, I'll hit you with this stick!"

"Then leave my mother out of your talk," replied Joe, threateningly.

"Oh, shoot your old woman! Who wants to talk about her? She never was no good for nothin'!"

With a cry of rage Joe fairly flew at his persecutor.

Job raised the stick and struck him a blow alongside the head.

The drunkard's son minded the blow no more than if it had been laid on by a wisp of straw, though it raised a red weal on his cheek.

He snatched the sapling out of young Ralston's hand, threw it into the bushes, and then gave him an upper-cut with his left fist in the jaw that made every tooth in his head rattle like a pair of castanets.

Before Job could do anything to defend himself, he followed up his attack with a punch in the eye that made the bully cry out with pain and terror.

Then it was biff! swat! smash!

Every blow landed like a pile-driver on the face of the young rascal, and he fell all over himself, crying out: "Help!—Sam!—help! He's murderin' me! Help! help!"

## CHAPTER V.

### FACING THE WORLD.

Sam Parker felt as if it was time for him to chip in, though he didn't like the look on Joe Benton's face.

He knew that his companion had provoked the trouble, and that he wasn't getting any more than he deserved.

Still it was his duty to try and save Job from the consequences of his nasty disposition, so he stepped forward and said, in a conciliatory tone:

"Oh, come, now, Joe Benton, let up on him! You've hit him enough!"

"Don't you interfere, Sam Parker," replied Joe, turning on him, "unless you want some of the same medicine! You heard what he said about my mother and father! Suppose you were in my shoes—would you stand for it?"

"Well, you've licked him for it—what more do you want? If you hurt him you'll get into trouble, for his father will make things hot for you."

"I'm not afraid of his father," replied Joe. "He's done harm enough to us already by making a drunkard of my father. I have a very small opinion of a man who will make a practice of selling liquor to an unfortunate person cursed with the taste for it. Get up!" he added to Job. "Keep your mouth shut, and I'll let you alone; but if you dare utter another slander against either my dead mother or my father I'll half kill you, if I go to the lock-up for it!"

Thus speaking, Joe hauled off, and Sam assisted his companion on to his feet.

"Why didn't you help me?" whined Job to Sam. "The two of us could have licked the stuffin' out of him."

"Oh, cut it out and come on! You can get square with him another time."

"You can bet your life I'll get square with him, if I die for it," said Job, with a malevolent glance at the boy he hated.

Sam grabbed him by the arm and hauled him away, and soon their retreating footsteps died away in the wood.

Joe watched them till they disappeared, then he started off in the direction of the cottage.

The question that worried him was how to prevent his mother from being buried as a common pauper.

He was ready to mortgage his services for a year or more, if, by so doing, he could secure her respectable burial, like a Christian.

On his return he found that his mother had been washed and laid out, in readiness for the undertaker, and he told his trouble to the Widow Cameron.

She advised him to call on the undertaker and have a talk with him.

She further told Joe that she would loan him enough money to see him through if the undertaker would not voluntarily help him out.

The boy thanked her gratefully, and assured her that he would, in time, pay her back every cent that she advanced.



He found that his father was still asleep, and yet ignorant of his wife's death.

What he would say or do when he learned the truth, Joe had not the slightest idea, but could only hope that he would behave himself, for the time being, at least.

He had some fear, after what Job Ralston had said about there being evidence against his father, that his parent might be taken into custody at any moment.

He tried to comfort himself with the reflection that Job had been merely bluffing, for though he felt certain that his father was guilty of the crime, yet he had no wish to see him suffer for it.

In one way, it seemed like an act of just retribution that Ralston's rum shop had gone up in smoke, as he had largely assisted Ike Horton in making a wreck of his father, and had since encouraged the unfortunate man to spend all the money he could scrape together at his vile tavern.

As the village undertaker wouldn't listen to Joe Benton, except on a spot cash basis, he had to fall back on the Widow Cameron, who loaned him \$100, to be repaid at his convenience, she said.

The funeral took place on the afternoon of the day following Mrs. Benton's death, and was attended by about a dozen people.

Joe assumed the place of chief mourner, although his father was present and perfectly sober.

William Benton seemed to realize that the death of his wife was going to make a whole lot of difference in his mode of life.

He had little to say, and his sullen demeanor did not invite sociability, while his conduct toward his wife for two or three years before her death prevented him from being the recipient of much sympathy.

When father and son returned home after the funeral, Joe asked his parent what he was going to do.

Benton said he was going to sell out the personal property and leave the village.

"The greater part of the money realized ought to go to Mrs. Cameron," said Joe, "for she advanced the cost of the funeral and the price of the grave, and thus saved mother from being buried like a pauper."

"I need the money myself," growled Benton. "I've got to live. Widow Cameron has got plenty of money and don't need it."

"That makes no difference. She ought to get her money back as soon as possible, and I'm going to see that she does. I'm entitled to half of what the stuff brings, and I'll give her that on account. The balance I intend to earn, and pay her as I make it, until the debt is squared."

Benton said nothing.

He did not intend to give his son half, if he could help it, and he thought he could.

On the following morning, while they were at breakfast, Constable Jones arrived at the house, and arrested Benton on the charge of having fired the tavern and roadhouse.

The man was knocked all of a heap, for he had begun to flatter himself that he was safely out of the trouble.

"I didn't set fire to the place," he protested, nervously. "I can prove that I was home in bed all night. Joe will swear to that fact."

Joe said nothing.

He felt that he was in a bad position.

He saw that his father expected him to take oath that he (Benton) was in bed at the cottage at the hour the fire occurred, and the boy knew that he couldn't swear to a lie, even to save his father, much as he desired to shield him from the consequences of the crime.

Benton was taken to the lock-up, and an hour or two later was brought up for examination before Justice Cox.

The magistrate's office was crowded with curiously disposed villagers, who were more or less inclined to believe the drunkard of the village guilty.

Ralston, the tavern keeper, appeared to prosecute the prisoner.

He testified as to the time when, for good and sufficient reasons, he had ejected the man from his barroom, and told how Benton had stood in the road and threatened to get back at him for being put out.

He said the fire happened something like an hour later, and he advanced many reasons, of a circumstantial nature, which caused him to believe that William Benton was the incendiary.

Benton, in his own defence, attempted to prove an alibi through his son, but Joe refused to swear that his father was in the house at the time he said he was, whereupon Benton abused his son in a savage manner, and hurt his case so bad that he was held for trial by the justice.

Although there was scarcely any one among the villagers but believed the man guilty, it was considered doubtful that the crime would be brought home to him at his trial if he had any kind of a clever lawyer to defend him.

He was removed that afternoon to the county jail in Exeter, and there we shall leave him to meet his fate at the next session of the Circuit Court.

His father out of the way, Joe took upon himself to sell the personal property in the cottage to liquidate, as far as possible, the funeral expenses of his mother.

After turning most of the money thus received over to the Widow Cameron, Joe made several fruitless attempts to get work, either in the village or in the neighborhood.

Finding that conditions were against him, he decided to go to Buffalo and see if he could get a job there.

Accordingly he packed his modest grip, and, after taking leave of all his friends and acquaintances, he started to walk to the big railroad town at the head of Lake Erie.

He had a long walk ahead of him, but as he was a sturdy and resolute boy, he did not feel the least bit discouraged by the prospect ahead of him.

He was ready to face the world and carve out his own future, confident that success would eventually come to him.

He started out early in the morning, after having partaken of a good breakfast at the home of the kindly disposed Widow Cameron, who wished him every success on his journey, and begged him to write to her at his earliest chance, as she didn't want to lose track of him entirely.

He carried a few dollars in silver in his grip, to meet the more pressing expenses of his trip, and with the sunshine in his face he walked out of Glenwood village, bound for Buffalo.

By noon he had covered twelve miles, and stopped at a farmhouse for dinner.

He offered to pay for the meal, but the farmer declined to accept pay from him.



Things went well with him for several days, and he had traveled about 100 miles, when he ran afoul of hard luck.

On the afternoon of the fourth day, as he was passing a tumbledown building close to the roadside, four hard-looking tramps issued from it and held him up.

One was a stout ruffian, who had the appearance of being a typical tramp; another, tall and thin in stature, looked like a very common crook, while the other two seemed to be a combination of all that was unsavory.

"Where are yer bound?" demanded the fat scoundrel.

"Buffalo," replied Joe, drawing back in distaste for their company.

"Yer never kin walk so far with sich a heavy valise," grinned fatty. "Here, chappies!" he said, snatching it from the boy's hand, "see if yer can't make it light enough for him to carry."

While two of the tramps busied themselves emptying Joe Benton's valise, the thin ruffian compelled the boy to exchange clothes with him, while the stout rascal appropriated his derby.

"Now skip!" cried the latter, menacingly, pointing down the road.

Joe knew better than to enter into any argument with the rascals.

They had him where the hair was short, and he found it prudent to say nothing and saw wood.

Looking much the worse for his encounter with the rascals, he started off in the direction he had been instructed

## CHAPTER VI.

### A HOSPITABLE WELCOME.

Joe, as he walked off down the road, felt that he cut a sorry figure in the cast-off garments of the thin rascal who had appropriated his coat and trowsers.

"I'll be pulled in for a tramp at the first village I strike," he muttered, disconsolately, as he stooped to turn up the trowser legs, that were several inches too long for him. "Talk about hard luck! I think this is simply fierce! It's bad enough to have to walk all the way to Buffalo; but to be robbed of the little money and few clothes I brought along is rubbing things in with a vengeance. I feel like a fish out of water in this scarecrow suit. I haven't worn clothes for a long time that were any too good, but they were not ragged; they passed in a crowd. Now I feel like hiding in the bushes if any person was to come along."

Poor Joe continued to tramp along the lonely road till it grew dark; then lights began to twinkle at long intervals across the landscape, denoting the presence of farmhouses here and there.

He was now both tired and hungry.

Heretofore it had been his practice to walk up to a conveniently located farmhouse and offer to pay for a meal or a night's lodging, explaining that he was walking to Buffalo in order to save money, of which he admitted that he did not have a great deal.

In no case had he been turned away, as his frank, open countenance inspired confidence, and up to this point he had not been charged a cent.

Two or three farmers let him do a few chores in return for his dinner or a bed, but in most cases he was not required to contribute anything.

Now he felt ashamed to approach a hospitable farmer, for he had no money to offer, and he felt that his personal appearance would arouse suspicion and result in a turn-down.

So, famished and weary, he continued his walk, a prey to the gloomiest thoughts.

The immediate future had lost its encouraging, roseate hues.

Like Christian, in the Pilgrim's Progress, he was walking in the valley of the shadow, and he did not know how to extricate himself from his difficulties.

As the evening grew apace, he saw the lights of a village, or a small town, far ahead to the left.

The road swung away to the right, and it looked like a long walk to reach the place unless he took to the wood on the left, which seemed to offer a short cut.

He decided to leave the road and save a mile or two.

It was the spring of the year, and the trees were only just beginning to awake from their winter sleep.

The wood, after he had got well into it, seemed frightfully still.

The white, ghostly moon, sifting through the bare branches that hung solemn and silent in the calm night air, poured a soft, weird light all around him, and threw the gaunt-looking shadows out into bold relief.

The only sound that came to his ears was the rustle of his shoes upon the old dead leaves.

He felt more lonely and desolate than ever.

His mother was dead.

His father the inmate of a cell in the Exeter county jail, held on a serious charge.

Himself a homeless wanderer, journeying to a large city, where his luck might prove to be the opposite of what he expected.

What wonder was it, at that lone hour, in the solitude of the wood, the most impressive of all solitudes, that Joe Benton, for the first time in his life, began to feel nervous and fanciful?

He began to regret that he had not kept to the road, for there he could see the lights, which were a kind of company for him.

But he could not go back now.

He must keep on, and so he screwed up his courage as well as he could and stepped bravely forward, though more than once he paused in dismay at the sight of the moon-beams shining on a scarred tree-trunk, causing it to resemble some ghostly object waiting in his path to waylay him.

He tried to whistle some familiar air, but the sound died on his lips, for his heart was not in it.

At length, through a break in the wood, he saw the road once more, and between it and the trees a large mansion and well-kept grounds—the residence of some well-to-do resident of that locality.

The sight of a human habitation, and the moonlit landscape beyond, revived Joe's courage, and he felt like himself again.

He heard the bark of a dog, and saw lights in the rear addition of the dwelling, which he took to be the kitchen.

Leaning against a tree, he wondered if he dare approach the house and ask for something to eat.

Ordinarily, he would hardly have taken the risk in his



present unsavory outfit, but he was so desperately hungry that he could not resist the temptation.

So he made his way across a barren field to the yard surrounded by barns and outhouses, and was aiming for the back door, when he was suddenly confronted by the watch-dog, who was loose.

The animal looked ugly, and seemed inclined to spring at him, so Joe stopped, undecided whether to advance or retreat, either of which movements was likely to be attended with danger.

While facing this dilemma the kitchen door was opened and a pretty young girl stepped out into the yard with a shallow pan in her hand.

"Here, Tige!" she called. "Come here, good boy! Tige! Tige! Where are you?"

The animal, who was accustomed to answer the first sound of his young mistress's voice, was unresponsive now.

His whole attention was concentrated on Joe, whom he regarded with suspicion and enmity.

"Here, Tige! Tige!" called the girl, as she advanced into the yard. "Where——"

She stopped suddenly on seeing the trampish figure of the boy standing at bay near the carriage house, with Tige crouching before him, within springing distance, in a menacing way.

"Who's there?" she asked, feeling as if she wanted to draw back, yet conscious that she was safe in the presence of the dog.

"Will you call the dog off, please?" asked Joe, pleadingly.

The intruder's voice did not seem to fit well with his wretched-looking attire.

It was not the voice of a rough, uncultured boy.

There was an honest, manly ring to it that impressed the girl favorably.

She walked right up beside the dog, who began to growl and exhibit unmistakable signs of uneasiness at the presence of his mistress.

"Stop, Tige!" she said sharply, and the animal subsided, but his watchful eyes never left the boy for an instant. "Who are you, and what are you doing here?" she asked Joe, in a tone that was not unfriendly.

"My name is Joe Benton, miss. I am walking from the village of Glenwood, Blank County, to Buffalo."

"Buffalo!" she ejaculated. "That's some distance from here."

"Yes, miss. This afternoon I was waylaid by four tramps along the road. They robbed me of my valise, containing the little money and few things I possessed, and one of them compelled me to exchange clothes with him. I know I look like a wreck, but I can't help it. I am tired and almost starving. I would like to get something to eat. If you will let me have it I'll go back to the wood and sleep there until morning, when I will keep on to the place I saw somewhere ahead when I left the road."

There was a note of sincerity and forlorn appeal in Joe's voice that touched the girl.

She walked up closer to the boy, the dog following, with a growl of displeasure at what he probably considered her temerity.

The girl studied Joe's face a moment in the moonlight.

What she saw there convinced her that he spoke the

truth—that he was an honest, needy boy, whose necessities it were a charity to relieve.

"Come with me," she said. "You shall have all you can eat. Here, Tige," turning to the dog, "are a few dainties for you."

She placed the pan on the ground, under the animal's nose, but Tige disregarded the delicacies and followed the girl and Joe as far as the kitchen door; then, considering that he had performed his duty as far as he was able, he returned to the pan.

The girl led Joe into the kitchen, and gave some instructions to the cook, after which she disappeared.

The cook placed a bountiful supply of meat, bread, and other edibles, before the wanderer, and he ate like a starved boy.

He learned that the young lady's name was Grace Fuller, and that she was the daughter of the owner of the house, who was president of the Corinth Bank, in the adjacent town.

Mr. Fuller and his wife had been unexpectedly called away that afternoon to the home of Mrs. Fuller's sister, in the town of Tamrack, fifteen miles away, who was critically ill, leaving the house in charge of Grace, the gardener-coachman, and three women servants.

After Joe had eaten as much as he wanted, Miss Grace reappeared and had a talk with him.

She was so satisfied that he was an honest, deserving boy that she gave him a \$10 bill with which to purchase a cheap suit in town on the morrow and help him on his way.

Then she called the gardener and told him to provide Joe with sleeping quarters in the barn for the night, and instructed the cook to give him his breakfast in the morning.

Joe expressed his gratitude to the young lady, bade her good-night, and followed the gardener to the barn.

"You can turn in on that pile of hay," said the gardener, pointing at a hillock on the ground floor, under a barred open window overlooking the field in the rear. "I'll have to lock you in, but the door will be open at six o'clock in the morning, which will be time enough for you, as the cook won't be ready to give you your breakfast before seven."

The man withdrew; then the boy threw himself upon the pile of hay and was asleep in five minutes.

## CHAPTER VII.

### A STARTLING DISCOVERY.

About two in the morning Joe awoke with a start.

He had had an unpleasant dream, in which the four tramps who waylaid him figured prominently.

He thought they were trying to break into a room where he was sleeping, and the sensation was not a pleasant one.

"So it was only a dream," he muttered, sitting up and wiping the perspiration from his forehead. "It was awfully real. I could see the fat fellow and the thin chap looking in at the window, with the moonlight shining on their faces. They looked ugly enough to commit murder, almost. It's funny that I should have such a realistic dream about them; but I suppose it was because they did me up in such a sharp way. I'm glad it was only a dream. I don't want to meet those chaps again."



At that moment he fancied that he heard voices outside the barred window.

He listened intently, and in a moment or two was certain he heard the low tones of two or more men who appeared to be standing under the window.

"Who can that be?" breathed Joe uneasily. "I wonder what time it is?"

There was a small step-ladder standing near by.

He left the hay, moved the step-ladder directly under the window, and was about to mount it when he heard a scraping sound against the side of the barn, and presently the rays of moonlight shining through the window were partially obscured by a dark object.

Joe looked up and saw the wicked-looking countenance of the stout tramp pressed against the bars, evidently investigating the interior of the barn.

The boy's heart nearly stopped beating, for the situation was almost a counterpart of his dream.

It gave him quite a shock to see that ruffian's face gazing in through the bars, which, however, looked solid enough to keep such a rascal on the other side.

Joe stood back in the shadows, where he couldn't very well be seen by the man at the window, but, nevertheless, he didn't feel easy until the face was withdrawn, and he heard the scraping sound again as he dropped back to the ground.

The boy waited to see if any other face would appear at the window, and finding that none did, he crept up the ladder and peered out.

Right under the opening stood the four tramps who had held him up.

They were talking together, and Joe gathered from their conversation that they were figuring on breaking into the mansion close by and securing such plunder as they could get their hands on.

"The rascals!" said the boy to himself. "Something must be done to prevent them carrying out their project. It's lucky I've got on to their purpose. The question is, how am I to get out of this barn in order to warn the people in the house, for I'm locked in, and the bars across this window keep me in as effectually as they keep any one on the outside from breaking in? It's my duty to see if I can't do something, for Miss Fuller has been very kind to me, and the least I can do is to make an effort to save her father's property."

While Joe was considering the situation a fifth man appeared on the scene.

He came from the direction of the house.

He was a tall, well-built fellow, with bushy whiskers.

As the moonlight shone in his face Joe gave a start of surprise.

He recognized him as Ike Horton, the man who had made a drunkard of his father.

The other ruffians were evidently waiting for him, for they gathered about him as soon as he came up.

"Well, Ike," asked the stout man, "what did yer find out?"

"All I wanted to know. The windows on the ground floor are all protected by steel shutters, barred on the inside. We haven't the tools to force them."

"How about the doors? Don't you think a jimmy will whistle the back one open?"

"Easily; but I'm thinkin' we'll find an iron one on the other side, judging by the shutters."

"Then we'll have to hunt up a ladder, or find something else that will give us a chance at one of the second-story windows," growled the stout man.

"No; there's a better and easier way of gettin' in than that," replied Horton.

"Let's hear about it, then."

"The bars protectin' one of the cellar windows are a bit loose in their sockets. We can easily force them out. The window itself is not locked."

"Good! But in any case a jimmy would force it in the twist of a lamb's tail."

"The opening is large enough to admit the whole of us, one by one. Once inside, we'll have a clean sweep, unless the cellar door is of iron and heavily bolted. One of us can investigate that first of all. If we can't get through it, then we'll have to try for a second-story window."

"What hour is it?" asked the thin one, who wore Joe's jacket and trowsers, though the latter were much too short for him.

"About two," replied Horton.

"Time we got down to business," said the stout man.

Horton, who appeared to be the leading spirit of the enterprise, nodded.

"Cuss this moonshine!" remarked the thin chap. "It shows a person up so. I'd like to put it out of business."

"The moon will be down before we're through with the job," said Horton. "Come on!"

The five men walked off around the barn, leaving Joe to figure out how he was going to get out of the building and put a stop to the rascals' game.

First of all, he tried the stout iron bars at his side.

He did it mechanically, because he knew in his heart that they were too solidly fixed to be removed by him.

He was right, and descended the step-ladder.

Then he walked to the big door which the gardener had locked upon him.

The moonlight shone full upon the stout lock, and he knew that, too, was a barrier he could not pass.

Next he looked around in the semi-obscurity of the big room, and saw a stairway leading to the upper floor.

He made his way up the stairs, and through the opening in the floor, into a dark loft.

A thin ray of moonlight shone through a crack in one side of the place.

That misty sheen of light attracted him, and he found himself standing before a barred shutter.

It was a stout wooden bar, set in a pair of staples, and was easily removed.

Catching hold of an iron ring that his fingers encountered, he pulled on it, and the shutter swung open with a creak, revealing an opening fifteen or twenty feet from the ground.

The way of egress from the barn was before him, for a drop of fifteen feet is not so much for an agile, resolute boy.

Inside of two minutes he was picking himself up from the ground, a bit shaken up by the fall.

He ran to the end of the barn around which the men had vanished, and peered cautiously in the direction of the mansion.



He saw four of the rascals squatting on the grass against the side of the building—two on either side of one of the cellar windows.

Joe, after what he had heard Horton say, concluded that this window had been forced, and that Horton himself was now in the cellar, for he was not outside with the others.

Presently he saw the men bend their heads toward the opening, then one got on his hands and knees, and entered the window backward.

As soon as he disappeared the others followed him, one by one.

"Now what shall I do?" Joe asked himself. "How shall I give the alarm so as to have some of the rascals caught in the act? I wonder where the gardener sleeps? If I could find out, and arouse him, there would be two of us against them."

He walked out into the yard where the moonlight was cut off by the shadows cast by the outbuildings.

The carriage house and stable combined adjoined the barn.

It consisted of two stories, the windows of the upper floor being set off by curtains, indicating that it might be a bedroom.

A narrow entrance alongside of the big double doors indicated the way by which the second floor was reached.

Joe noticed that there was a push-button in the door-post near the knob.

He jumped to the conclusion that the gardener slept upstairs in the room where the curtains were.

To test the matter he pushed the button, which he guessed connected with a bell or gong in the room above.

He held his finger on it, and in a few moments he heard one of the windows pushed up, a man's head was thrust out, and a voice, which he recognized as that of the gardener, inquired who was there.

"Me," replied Joe.

"And who are you?" asked the puzzled gardener.

"Joe Benton, the boy you locked in the barn."

"The dickens!" ejaculated the surprised man. "How did you get out, and what do you want?"

"I got out by an opening in the loft."

"What did you do that for?"

"Put on your clothes quick, and come down!"

"Why, what's wrong?"

"There are thieves in the house, and we want to do something about catching them."

"Thieves in the house!" gasped the gardener in astonishment.

"Yes. Come down and let me in, and I'll tell you all about it while you're dressing."

The earnest ring of Joe's voice told the man that something was clearly wrong, so he shut down the window, ran down the narrow flight of stairs, and admitted Joe.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### FACING THE BURGLARS.

"You said that there were thieves in the house," said the gardener. "How do you know that?"

"I'll tell you when we get upstairs and you are getting into your clothes," replied the boy.

By the time the gardener was dressed he had learned

all about the presence of the five rascals, and how they had forced their way into the mansion by way of one of the cellar windows.

"The question is, how can the two of us put a spoke in their wheels?" said Joe. "There are five pretty tough roosters to handle, and the chances are they carry either revolvers or knives. I guess if they have weapons they won't hesitate to use them. Have you got a gun?"

"Yes, I've a revolver," and the gardener took it from under the head of his bed. "If we could reach Mr. Fuller's library without their knowledge I could send word to the Corinth police over the private telephone wire; but as you say there are five of the rascals in the house, I'm afraid we never would be able to do the trick."

"We've got to do something," said Joe, in a resolute tone. "They mustn't be allowed to rob the place if we can manage in any way to prevent them."

"It's a pity that Mr. Fuller is away from home," said the gardener, in an undecided way.

Joe could see that the man was not very anxious to face five determined burglars, who might be armed.

"Give me your revolver," said Joe, "and I will enter the house first, by way of the cellar. We will see if we can make our way to the library. If we can, I will try and hold the rascals off while you telephone."

The gardener consented to this arrangement, though it was clear that he did not relish the job.

They crossed the yard stealthily to the cellar window, from which they saw that the bars had been torn off.

If the gardener had had any lingering doubts as to the truth of the boy's story he had none now when he saw the twisted bars lying on the grass, and the cellar window open to its fullest extent.

Joe wriggled himself down into the cellar, and the gardener followed him.

The place was quite dark, and unfamiliar to the boy, but the gardener showed him the way to the stairs.

Holding the revolver in readiness for instant action, Joe tiptoed his way up to the ground floor, and found himself standing in the gloom of a small entry leading to the butler's pantry and kitchen.

"Where is the library?" whispered the boy.

"It's a small room on this floor, connecting with the parlor and the front hall."

They listened intently for sounds that would enable them to locate the present whereabouts of the burglars.

For a few moments they heard nothing suspicious, then muffled noises came from a room which the gardener said was the dining-room.

"There is a safe in there containing the silver," he whispered.

"They won't waste time over that," replied Joe, "for they haven't any tools to help them get into it."

He sneaked over to the door opening on the main hall, and listened.

The gardener stood close behind him, and listened also.

"Some of them are in the dining-room and the sitting-room, and there is one or more in the parlor. We can't reach the telephone without being discovered," he said.

"Then we must wait till they go upstairs," said Joe.

So they waited as patiently as they could, listening all the while to the sounds made by the rascals, who were



gathering up whatever they could find of value downstairs that they could carry away.

The parlor was full of small articles of more or less value, and these the five rascals were making up into small bundles for easy handling.

There were also many articles of fine plated ware in the dining-room that the burglars considered worth appropriating, and many expensive knick-knacks in the sitting-room.

They could see the dark figures of a couple of the rascals crossing the wide and dimly lighted hall, from the sitting-room to the parlor, and back again.

At length, after bringing all the plunder they had collected in the parlor and library into the sitting-room, three of the chaps mounted the stairs as softly as shadows.

"Now," said Joe, "can you reach the library through that door?"

"If it isn't locked I can," answered the gardener.

"Try it. Be careful not to make any noise, for two of the rascals are down here, probably busy with the collected plunder in the sitting-room, the door of which on the hall is open. The parlor door is probably open, too. Before you use the telephone sneak around and close the door, or the bell and what you say into the transmitter may reach the ears of the two fellows down here."

"What are you going to do?" asked the gardener.

"I'm going to stand watch here. If one or both of those rascals should come into the hall and start to enter the parlor again I'll hold them up."

The gardener softly crossed to the closed door of the library, tried the knob, and found that the door yielded to his touch.

He disappeared inside, closing the door after him.

As Joe stood by the hall entrance he could easily hear sounds of low conversation and the rattle of articles being packed up in the sitting-room.

Suddenly a shriek rang out through the house.

"My gracious!" exclaimed Joe. "That must be Miss Fuller. She's been aroused by those rascals upstairs, and they may do her an injury."

A second cry, but a muffled one, followed, and Joe feared they had got hold of the girl and were trying to intimidate her to keep quiet.

Of course her first shrill outcry was sure to awaken the two female servants who slept in the top of the back part of the house, and he looked for trouble.

The gratitude he felt toward Miss Fuller for her hospitality to him aroused a strong impulse on his part to go to her aid, in spite of the odds he would be compelled to face.

The gardener had told him that the back stairway in the entry leading to a landing above offered communication with the front of the second floor by way of a door.

Joe, remembering this, left his post at the rear of the main hall and ran up the back stairs.

Arrived at the landing, he heard a door open on the third floor, and concluded that one or both of the servants had come out of their rooms to find out the cause of the disturbance.

There was a door on his right and another on his left.

He opened one and found it led into an unoccupied bedroom.

Muffled sounds came from the chamber in front of it.

Joe opened a door in that direction, and found himself in a handsome tiled bathroom.

There was a door opposite, through which the sounds came quite plainly to him.

He knew the trouble was taking place in that room, and nerving himself for the encounter he was about to face, he opened the door and walked in, revolver in hand.

He was now in Grace Fuller's bedroom.

The girl was in bed, staring up, in a frightened way, into the masked face of the man with the bushy whiskers, whom Joe knew to be Ike Horton.

He held a pointed revolver at her head, while the thin rascal, the one who wore Joe's clothes, was hastily rummaging the dresser for articles of value.

The pocket of his jacket was already full of jewelry and a handsome diamond-encrusted watch and charm, which Grace had only lately received from her father as a birthday present.

Joe took in the situation at a glance, and without wasting a second in addressing the two crooks, he fired straight at Horton's arm.

Simultaneously with the stunning crack of the weapon Horton uttered a cry of pain, and his revolver dropped from his nerveless grasp on to the bed.

Grace's terrified gaze wandered to the spot where Joe stood, in all his ragged make-up, and she recognized the boy; but not for some moments did she comprehend that he had come to her aid.

The thin rascal turned around, startled by the report of the gun in Joe's hands, and the cry uttered by his companion.

"Throw up your hands, both of you!" cried the boy in a determined tone, "or I'll put a ball into you!"

"Oh, Lor'!" gasped the thin crook.

Horton uttered a fierce imprecation as he stood holding on to his wounded arm.

"Pick up that revolver, Miss Fuller," said Joe, "and cover one of those chaps."

The girl seemed too dazed, or too much frightened, to obey.

At that moment the stout scoundrel, who had been rummaging in the room on the opposite side of the front landing, peered into the chamber, with a drawn revolver in his hand.

Joe saw him and raised his weapon to intimidate him.

The rascal, taking things in at once, covered Joe with his revolver at the same moment.

To save himself the boy saw he'd have to fire.

Both weapons cracked together.

Joe felt a sting like the touch of a hot iron above his right ear, and for a moment it seemed as if the room was whirling around and around.

At the same time he heard a cry as from afar off.

The next thing he knew was the sensation of being pressed roughly against the wall of the room by some one who had a grip on his throat.

As his senses returned to him he saw that Horton had sprung upon him, and was holding him with his unwounded arm and the point of his knee.

The blood was running down his right cheek from the wound he had received from the stout man's revolver.



His own weapon lay on the floor at his feet.

As he started to struggle desperately with the man who held him pinned against the wall, Horton shouted to the thin chap:

"Come here, Simpson, and help me secure this young monkey!"

As the fellow started to obey, Grace Fuller seemed to wake up to the situation.

She snatched up the revolver that lay on the coverlet of her bed, aimed it at Horton, and pulled the trigger. Then she slipped into a wrapper.

The rascal uttered a groan, and, staggering away from Joe, fell upon the carpet and clutched wildly at the air.

The next instant the boy and Simpson were engaged in a desperate struggle for mastery, while Grace, with the smoking weapon in her hand, watched them with distended eyes, unable to shoot again for fear of hitting her young champion.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE CAPTURE OF THE HOUSEBREAKERS.

Joe found that Simpson was strong and wiry, and rather more than he could handle successfully.

The rascal was not armed, and he was trying to do Joe up by sheer strength.

They rolled over and over on the carpet, Simpson sometimes on top, and sometimes Joe.

While the struggle was going on the gardener, who had succeeded in connecting with police headquarters at Corinth, and explaining the situation, was in a funk over the revolver reports upstairs, for he feared murder had been done by the burglars.

He had not the courage to go up to the second floor, unarmed as he was, for he felt that he would be placed completely at the mercy of the rascals, and might lose his life to no purpose.

He opened the library door and looked for Joe, but found that the boy had left his post at the rear hall door.

He judged that Joe had gone upstairs and tackled the burglars single handed, firing at them and being shot at in return.

This was the only way he could account for the shooting, as he did not believe that the rascals would wantonly use their weapons on the women.

As none of the chaps came downstairs after the firing, it was his impression that the boy had been put out of business.

The two crooks who were packing the plunder downstairs in sections of table cloths they had torn into suitable lengths, stopped in their labors on hearing the shots.

It looked as if their pals had met with unexpected opposition on the floor above, and they hastened to provide an avenue for rapid retreat by throwing up one of the sitting-room windows and opening the steel shutters.

Then they went into the hall and listened.

They heard the muffled sounds of the struggle going on between Joe and Simpson in Miss Fuller's bedroom.

The true cause of the noise did not seem to occur to them.

They believed it was made by their companions moving around after having shot whoever had interfered with them,

so they did not think it necessary to go upstairs to look around.

In their opinion, their three pals were well able to look out for themselves, and had they met with any serious setback they would have come running downstairs in a hurry.

After listening, and hearing nothing to alarm them, they returned to their work in the sitting-room, expecting their associates to reappear at any moment with the plunder they had picked up above.

In the meantime the struggle between Simpson and Joe continued.

Whatever advantage there was rested with the thin crook. Grace watched them with an anxious eye, fully prepared to shoot and wound the burglar if she got a fair chance.

Had she been confident of her ability as a markswoman, she would have found many chances, but as it was, she was afraid to fire at Simpson lest she hit Joe.

Finally the boy, owing to loss of blood from his wound and the superior strength of his antagonist, began to succumb.

Simpson got him down on his back and held him there.

Then seeing the revolver on the floor, he reached for it, with the intention of sturning Joe with a clip on the head.

This gave Grace the opportunity she had been looking for.

Instead of shooting Simpson, which she might easily have done, she pluckily jumped forward and struck him alongside the head with her weapon.

The rascal fell over, partly stunned, and that gave Joe the chance to complete the good work.

He seized a towel that hung over the back of a chair, tore it into three strips, and tied Simpson's arms behind his back and his ankles together.

Then he looked at Ike Horton, who lay groaning with pain on the carpet.

There was no need of tying him, apparently, for he had a bullet through the upper part of his right arm and a wound in the side where Grace Fuller had shot him.

"We've got two of the rascals dead to rights, at any rate," said Joe to the girl. "I wonder if the others have skipped? If they have I don't see why the gardener doesn't come up here and investigate the shooting. He went into the library, downstairs, to telephone to the police in town, and must have heard the reports of the revolvers."

"How many of these men were in the house?" asked Grace. "There's another one lying over by the door."

"Is there?" replied Joe, in some surprise.

"Yes. You shot him when he fired at you."

"I hope I didn't kill him," said the boy, walking over and looking at the stout ruffian, who lay, unconscious, over the door-sill, with a red, bleeding furrow across one side of his forehead, where Joe's bullet had ploughed its way. "No, he's not dead," he added, glad of that fact, for it seemed a dreadful thing to him to take a human life, even in self-defence.

Then he told the girl that five burglars had entered the mansion through one of the cellar windows, and tied up the third burglar.

"The other two, who were packing up their plunder downstairs in the sitting-room, have, no doubt, got away before this. I'm going down to investigate and look up the gardener."



"You are a brave boy," said Grace, looking at him admiringly. "You have saved our house from being robbed, and you saved me from being frightened to death by that man who threatened me with his revolver."

"Well, I did the best I could under the circumstances; but if you had not shot the fellow yourself when he had me pinned against the wall, I don't think I could have done much. You're quite a plucky girl yourself, Miss Fuller."

"I shot him because I was afraid he and the other man intended to kill you, between them. But you are wounded! Let me wash the blood away and bind the cut up," she said, with anxious solicitude.

"Don't worry about me, Miss Fuller. I'll attend to that later. It doesn't bother me much, and there is no time to attend to it now. I must see if the rest of the crooks have gone. Let me have that revolver."

He took the weapon from her hand and walked softly downstairs.

As he stepped into the hall he saw the scared face of the gardener at the door of the library.

The man showed great surprise on seeing him, and beckoned him over, at the same time motioning toward the door of the sitting-room.

Joe understood from his pantomime that the other two rascals were still in the house—in the sitting-room.

This idea was confirmed as soon as he reached the gardener's side.

"What about that shooting upstairs?" asked the gardener eagerly. "I see you are wounded. Where are the three men who went upstairs?"

"Down and out," replied Joe.

"You don't mean it?" cried the man, astonished.

"I do. Why didn't you come up when you heard the firing? I would have been put out of business only for Miss Fuller, who shot one of the rascals when he had me dead to rights after I was shot myself. I laid out the fellow who fired at me, and Miss Fuller helped me get the best of the third chap. That girl showed a great deal more spunk in the emergency than you have. Did you 'phone the police?"

"Yes. They are on their way here."

"Good enough! Here! Take this gun of yours, and we'll hold up the two who are in the sitting-room. It's a wonder they didn't come upstairs and see what the shooting amounted to."

"They came as far as the sitting-room door and then went back again."

"You are sure they're in there, are you?"

"Yes. Can't you hear them talking?"

"I do now. Come on! Let us finish up this business."

Joe led the way to the door of the sitting-room, and then he and the gardener sprang into the room and covered the two crooks, who had finished their packing, and were impatiently waiting the return of their companions.

"Up with your hands!" cried Joe, sternly.

The rascals were taken entirely by surprise.

They were also unarmed, and were thus at the mercy of Joe and the gardener.

They made a break for the window, but Joe stopped them with the threat that he would shoot them down unless they gave in.

Seeing that they had no chance of escaping, they sullenly yielded.

Joe backed them up into a corner of the room, where he could easily keep his eyes and revolver on both, and then told the gardener to open the front door so that the police could enter when they arrived.

As soon as he had done this the boy sent him upstairs to stay with Grace, and keep watch on the knocked out burglars there.

Inside of a quarter of an hour a light wagon drove up to the house with several policemen in it.

They walked right in, as the front door had been left open for them.

Joe called to them, and they came into the sitting-room and took charge of the two rascals the boy was guarding.

Two of them accompanied Joe upstairs to Grace's room.

The gardener was keeping watch in a chair in the middle of the room.

The stout ruffian had recovered his senses, but as Joe had taken the precaution to secure his arms he could do nothing.

The three burglars were carried downstairs.

The two wounded ones were immediately removed to the waiting wagon.

When the officers came back for the third, Joe told the policeman in charge of the squad that Simpson had his pants and coat on, and he wanted to recover them and give the rascal back his own tattered garments.

He explained to the officer how four of the men had held him up and robbed him on the road the previous afternoon.

Simpson sullenly admitted the truth of the boy's statement, and at the policeman's command he took off the stolen clothes and put on his own.

Joe also recovered his hat from the stout man.

The officers then carried off their prisoners, with the assurance of Grace that her father would be on hand to press the charge of housebreaking against the rascals as soon as he returned home and learned the particulars of the case.

The excitement being now over, Joe said he would return to the barn and finish his interrupted night's rest.

Grace would not hear of that, however.

"I could not think of letting you sleep in the barn after what you have done for us to-night. You must occupy the chamber back of this. John will take you there. You must not go away until my father has seen and thanked you for the service you have performed. I hope you understand that I am very grateful to you, and you may be sure that father and mother will appreciate your brave conduct, and reward you in a suitable manner," said the girl.

"I don't ask any reward, Miss Fuller," replied Joe. "You were very kind to give me food and shelter when I asked you for it, and I am glad I had the opportunity to return the favor."

"What I gave you was but a small thing. The service you have rendered us is very important. You have probably saved several thousand dollars' worth of our property. That watch and jewelry of mine, alone, are easily worth \$500, and I should have lost it all but for your courageous action."



The girl, who had noticed his suddenly improved personal appearance in some perplexity, asked him about it, and he told her that he had recovered his clothes from the rascal who had appropriated them the afternoon before.

"You look ever so much better," she answered, with a smile. "Not at all like you did when I met you last night in the yard. Now, John," to the gardener, "take Mr. Benton to the guest chamber on this floor, and see that he has everything he needs for the night."

Joe bowed, and said good-night to the young lady of the house, and followed the man to the room in question.

To Joe's eyes the brass bed looked almost too nice for him to sleep in, but, nevertheless, after the gardener had retired, he was glad to undress and turn in, for he was conscious that he stood greatly in need of rest after his late exertions.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE RAILROAD ACCIDENT.

Joe didn't eat in the kitchen next morning, but in the dining-room, as the guest of Grace Fuller, who took special pains to let him see how much she appreciated his plucky conduct in connection with the capture of the burglars.

Early that morning she had got into communication with her father by telephone, and after learning what had happened Mr. Fuller told her that he would be home around ten o'clock.

While awaiting her father's arrival she devoted herself to entertaining Joe.

She made him feel as much at home as if he were one of her oldest friends, while he, on his part, tried to improve the favorable impression he had already made on her.

Banker Fuller drove up in his auto at a quarter past ten, and Grace introduced Joe to him as the lad who had saved their property and captured the five burglars.

He viewed the plunder the rascals had expected to carry off, and listened to the stories told by his daughter, Joe, and the gardener.

He figured up that the boy had saved him a loss of several thousand dollars, and he hastened to assure Joe of his gratitude and the appreciation he felt for his valuable services.

It was necessary that Joe and the gardener should attend the examination of the housebreakers in the court house at Corinth and give their testimony, so Mr. Fuller took them to town in his auto.

The evidence against the rascals was so conclusive that they were remanded for trial at the next term of the Circuit Court, when Joe would be required to appear as the chief witness against them.

This placed Joe in a rather peculiar predicament.

As he was a non-resident of the county, the judge would have caused his detention in town as a valuable witness but for Mr. Fuller, who guaranteed that the boy would be on hand when wanted.

After the examination was over, and they were on their way back to the banker's residence, Joe called Mr. Fuller's attention to the fact that he was a homeless boy, making his way to Buffalo, as best he could, in order to get a start in life there.

"I don't see how I can stay here until those men are tried, as I have practically no money, and no prospects of getting any right away. If I continue my walk to Buffalo, it is hard to say where I'll be six weeks from now, when the trial comes on. As you have guaranteed my presence here when wanted, I'll have to look to you for advice."

"You needn't worry about the money, Benton," replied the banker. "I'm going to make you a present of \$1,000, to show my appreciation of your services to my daughter and to myself."

"One thousand dollars!" exclaimed Joe, to whom such a sum seemed like a mint of money. "I'd hardly know what to do with so much money."

"Why, you'd put it in a savings bank, wouldn't you, till you got to be twenty-one, at least?" said the banker.

"I suppose so, sir, if I didn't find a better use for it. Do you really mean to give me as much as that?"

"Certainly. You are easily entitled to that much."

"Then I won't need to do any more tramping. I can ride the balance of the way to Buffalo, just as well as not."

"You need not break into the thousand for that purpose. I will provide you with a railway ticket to your destination and a few dollars extra for your immediate expenses; but it will be necessary for you to remain here until after the trial, and I will see that that doesn't cost you a cent."

Joe was invited to remain at the Fuller mansion until the trial of the housebreakers came off, and the arrangement suited him very well indeed.

Grace seemed to have taken a distinct liking for him, while he, on his side, was by no means indifferent to the many personal charms of the fair girl.

They often went to the town of Corinth together, and took frequent rides and walks about the neighborhood of the banker's home.

The more Grace saw of Joe the better she liked him, and it was just the same with Joe—he grew more interested in his fair companion the longer he was in her company.

The boy, however, maintained an almost complete reserve about his later life in Glenwood.

He said not a word about his father being a drunkard, and in prison, charged with a serious crime; nor about the way his surviving parent had practically sent his wife to the grave, owing to his heartless conduct.

He felt that such a confession would reflect more or less discredit on himself, notwithstanding that he was in no wise responsible for his father's actions.

The six weeks passed away all too quickly for Joe, and the trial of the burglars came on.

His testimony in the witness chair clinched their conviction, and they were sentenced to ten years each in the State prison.

On the morning that they were put aboard a train bound for Auburn, in charge of a small posse of officers, Joe, with a \$1,000 draft on a Buffalo bank in his pocket, boarded the same train, bound for the Lake City, via Salamanca.

The prisoners were to change at Salamanca for a train going eastward, while Joe kept straight on northward to his destination.

His parting with Grace had been a rather tearful one on the girl's part, for she had come to think a great deal of



the stalwart, manly lad, who was facing the world all by himself in his fight for fortune.

They arranged between themselves to write to each other, as neither wanted to lose track of the other.

Joe had also been provided by the banker with a couple of letters of introduction to business people of Buffalo, which stated that any favor accorded to the bearer would be duly appreciated by Mr. Fuller.

The young traveler occupied a seat in one of the day coaches, and his thoughts were about evenly divided between Grace Fuller and what the future had in store for him.

The train was rapidly approaching Salamanca when something happened.

Some defect in one of the trucks of the smoking-car caused the coach to jump the track.

In a moment the connection was broken with the baggage car directly ahead, and the smoker tilted over and struck a long sliding switch, completely demolishing it.

The switch lever being pushed over, opened the siding where a heavy freight train was stalled until it could take the main track.

The smoker, pushed along by the fifty-mile-an-hour momentum of the passenger coaches and Pullman drawing-room cars behind, turned into the siding and went bumping over the sleepers toward the freight train, only a hundred feet away.

In a brief fraction of time, before any one on the train realized that an accident had happened, the smoker crashed into the caboose of the freight and smashed the little car as flat as a pancake.

The concussion with the heavy freight turned the smoker over on its side, and the day coach immediately behind it partially telescoped it, and then mounted the wreck like a horse taking a hurdle.

The second day coach, in which Joe was seated, butted into the rear of it, tearing the platform and part of the car to pieces, and throwing its own passengers about in all directions.

The heavy Pullmans crowded against this car and did considerable damage to it.

The thirty-odd box and platform cars of the freight ahead, together with its powerful locomotive and tender, were pushed on and jumbled together in a way productive of much injury to the rolling stock and their contents.

Altogether, the wreck was a rather bad one, attended with loss of life and physical injury, to the occupants of the smoker chiefly.

The whole thing happened inside of a few seconds, and as the unhurt but badly demoralized passengers poured out of the cars as fast as they could the sight presented to their eyes was not a reassuring one.

Among those who escaped scot free, though much shaken up, was Joe Benton.

The shock had thrown him from his seat over the back of the one directly in front, and knocked the breath out of his body.

Many of the people in the car had been more or less injured from being flung about, and their cries and moans echoed through the coach.

The casualties in the coach ahead were much larger, and of a more serious nature, while in the smashed smoker they were appalling.

When Joe pulled himself together he gazed around the car like one awakening from a bad dream.

The excited people were trying to extricate themselves and their friends from the coach.

A pandemonium of terror seemed to have broken loose.

He soon realized the situation, and his first thought was to assist any of his fellow travelers who needed aid.

He carried a little old lady from the car, first of all, and then went back and helped her aged companion, a white-haired old man, to alight.

Neither had suffered any material injury.

The coach being now emptied, Joe mingled with the crowd that was helping the passengers out of the forward coach, which was tilted up at an angle of thirty degrees or so, its forward trucks resting on the smashed roof of the smoker.

Several dead and dying persons were taken from this car and many badly injured ones.

The wreck of the smoker was a fearful one to look at.

Frantic efforts were being made to get out those of its surviving occupants, and Joe took a leading part in this sad duty, though the sights he saw turned his heart sick.

Among the dead and fatally injured he recognized two of the prisoners en route for Auburn, and their guards.

He looked around for Ike Horton, Simpson, and the stout rascal, whose name he had learned was Coates.

To his surprise, there was no sign of those rascals, either among the dead, the injured, or those few who had miraculously escaped.

Of the five guards who had accompanied the prisoners, three were dead and the other two were badly hurt.

"Can it be that those rascals escaped all injury and then got away from here in the confusion?" Joe asked himself.

The locomotive, with its express, mail, and baggage cars, was stopped some distance down the main track, and then backed up to the scene of the disaster.

The operator of the tower near the switch telegraphed the news to Salamanca, and afterward in the opposite direction, and north-bound trains were held up until the track was cleared.

The dead were loaded on to the baggage-car, and the seriously hurt were placed in the forward Pullman.

The rest of the passengers were crowded into the other two Pullman coaches, and the train, minus its smoker and two day coaches, started for Salamanca.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE NEW NIGHT WATCHMAN OF DOCK A.

Joe knew that the Fullers would hear of the railroad accident probably before night, and that Grace would be very anxious to learn how he had come out of it.

As soon as the train pulled into the depot he sent the following telegram to Mr. Fuller:

SALAMANCA, N. Y., June 6.

GEORGE FULLER, CORINTH BANK, CORINTH, N. Y.

We had bad smash-up on road, ten miles south of Salamanca. Several dead and many hurt. Ike Horton, Simpson, and Coates escaped in confusion. Other two dead. I am all right.

JOE BENTON.



The dead were removed to the city morgue, pending identification, while the badly wounded were carried to the hospital.

When the train finally continued on to Buffalo Joe went with it.

He reached the Lake City late in the afternoon and went to a moderate-priced hotel.

Next morning he presented one of his letters of introduction to the head of the shipping firm of Walker & Co., whose offices were on the lake front.

Mr. Walker promised to find an opening for him in his establishment in a few days, and the boy thanked him.

He showed the gentleman the draft he had on the Buffalo bank, and asked him if he would help him to cash it.

One of the office clerks was deputed to take him to the bank, identify him, and after Joe received the money guide him to a good savings bank, where he could open an account.

When this matter had been settled Joe started out to look up a cheap furnished room for himself.

He had no great difficulty in finding a place which he considered suitable for his means.

It was not far from the lake front, and within easy walking distance of the business house where he expected soon to be employed.

Joe called next day at the office of Walker & Co. and left his address.

Two days later he was sent for.

"The best thing I can offer you at present, Benton, is the post of watchman at our coal dock, foot of Jay Street, on the Buffalo River," said Mr. Walker, when Joe had been ushered into his office. "It's a night job."

"All right," replied the boy. "I don't care what the position is as long as I get a start at something."

"Very well," answered the head of the establishment, pleased at the boy's readiness to accept employment, even if it happened to be uncongenial. "I will send one of my clerks with you presently, to show you the dock and introduce you to the day man you relieve. I shall want you to start in to-night, as the other watchman has been discharged for habitual drunkenness."

"I am ready to begin at once, sir," replied Joe promptly.

"I am bound to say that I like your energetic ways, Benton, and you may rest assured that this position is merely a stepping-stone to something better. I shall keep you in mind, and as soon as a better opening offers you shall be advanced."

"Thank you, sir."

Mr. Walker then sent for a certain clerk.

"This is Joseph Benton, Harper. Take him over to Dock A and make him known to Adams. He will fill in there as night watchman till further notice."

The clerk bowed and then motioned Joe to follow him.

"So you're going to stand the night watch on Dock A, are you?" said Harper, after they were started on their way.

"So Mr. Walker says," answered Joe.

"You're a stranger in Buffalo, aren't you?"

"I am."

"Where do you hail from?"

"Glenwood, Blank County, New York."

"Country town, I suppose?"

"Hardly a town. It's a village."

"Tired of the country, and came to Buffalo to see a little of life, eh?" grinned Harper.

"I came to this city because there was no chance around Glenwood for me to get on."

"What did you do there? Work in a store, or on a farm?"

"I did more farm work than anything else."

"How came you to apply to our firm for work?"

"Brought a letter of introduction to Mr. Walker from Mr. Fuller of Corinth."

"This is a pretty tough job the boss is giving you—night watchman on Dock A."

"Oh, I guess I can stand it all right. When a fellow is looking for a position he can't always select what pleases him best. I understand it's only temporary, any way. Something to keep me out of mischief till a better job turns up."

"I hope you have plenty of nerve," said Harper, looking at him critically.

"Why?"

"Dock A is in a tough quarter of the town, and you're liable to be up against some tough roosters who hang around that neighborhood. If they took the notion to drop you into the river on a dark night they'd be apt to do it, unless you kept your weather eye lifting, and was as nimble as a young monkey."

"That so? Are they in the habit of playing such games as that?"

"They're in the habit of doing pretty much as they please."

"Don't the police ever interfere with such amusements?"

"The cops stationed in that neighborhood know better than to butt in on those chaps. If they did, a paving-stone might drop on their heads some night when they were not looking for it."

"According to you I have a pleasant prospect ahead."

"You certainly have."

"You're not jollying me, are you?" asked Joe, suspiciously.

"Not a bit of it. Ask Adams, the day watchman, and he'll confirm all I've told you. I'm rather surprised that Walker put a young chap like you, and a stranger in Buffalo, too, on the job."

"Maybe he doesn't know how tough it is."

"He ought to know, and I guess he does. Perhaps he thinks you'll pull through all right because you're a boy."

"I suppose I'll carry a gun to defend myself and keep intruders from the dock?"

"Oh, yes; but you'll need an arsenal to hold your own if the Night Owls ever get after you."

"The Night Owls, eh?"

"Yes. That's a gang that they say has a rendezvous somewhere in the neighborhood of Dock A."

"It's a wonder that the police wouldn't make a systematic raid on them and clean them out."

"The police have tried it several times, but failed to get any of them. They have a hiding place that has baffled all of the detectives. Every once in a while some detective, spurred on by a reward, goes down there to try to get a line on their retreat."

"And he fails?"



"His body is usually found floating in the river next day, or the day after."

"Well, I'll try and give a good account of myself while I hold the job."

"I hope you will. At any rate, you have my sympathy."

In due time they reached Dock A.

Joe took particular note of its surroundings.

Every third or fourth house along the river front in that locality appeared to shelter a saloon on the ground floor.

The buildings were largely of the cheap tenement class, and were occupied by longshoremen and their families, and others.

The others comprised many shady characters, known to the police, who slept and fraternized here during the days and early evenings, and put in the small hours of the night elsewhere.

It was a matter of no surprise to their acquaintances when these chaps failed to return from their trips abroad.

In such an event they would generally be found up on examination before some magistrate on the charge of highway robbery, or housebreaking, or something of that nature, and their old haunts missed them sometimes for years while they were living at the expense of the State.

The gang known as the Night Owls confined their operations to the water front.

They were a particularly desperate class of "undesirable citizens."

On election days they were to be seen around the polls in that district, and could always be relied upon by the leader of one of the political parties to bulldoze honest voters, and cast all the ballots necessary to insure victory for the side that took care of them financially, and when they got in trouble, and were haled before a magistrate on some charge or other.

It took the most positive kind of evidence to send one of them to prison, and their reputation was such that it was hard to get an eye-witness of a crime committed by one of them to go into court and testify.

Under such circumstances it was no wonder that the gang flourished, and laughed at the police.

All these facts Joe learned from Adams, the day watchman, before he went on duty that night, after eating his supper in a cheap restaurant in that neighborhood.

So when he went on duty at six o'clock, with a revolver in his hip pocket, he did so with all the resolution of a young hero who was resolved to do or die.

## CHAPTER XII.

### A STARTLING SURPRISE.

When darkness fell upon the face of nature, and the sounds of traffic were hushed, Joe began to understand that the country was not the only lonesome spot on earth at night.

There were lonesome spots even in the midst, as it were, of a big city.

The dark waters of the Buffalo River flowed around and past Dock A, as it did about other docks in that vicinity.

A fence surrounded the dock, leaving a narrow footway on either side, and was too high to be scaled by one man,

but the top could be reached by a second person standing on another's shoulders.

Joe's duty was to walk around the yard, and occasionally take a peep outside.

The walk up and down the gloomy and tenantless yard was not particularly exhilarating at night, because there was nothing to see but vague-looking objects and shadowy heaps of coal.

The peeps outside the fence were less drowsy, because they gave Joe a view of lighted houses and saloons across the wide water front, and life flowing past them.

At six o'clock he was relieved by Adams, who asked him how he had passed the night.

"All right, sir," replied Joe. "There wasn't a thing doing."

"Things might run that way for a week, or two weeks, or even longer. Then you might find somebody trying to get over the fence to help themselves to a pail of coal, or something else. The quickest way to get rid of them is to hail them once and order them away. If they don't go instant, hasten their movements with a bullet about their ears."

Joe got his breakfast at a nearby restaurant, and then hastened to his lodgings to have a good sleep.

He got up about three, had his dinner, and after walking around a while took a car which carried him within a couple of blocks of Dock A, where he reported at six.

It was close on to one o'clock in the morning when Joe heard men's voices on the outside of the fence.

The boy suspected that they were there for no good purpose, and he placed his ear to a convenient knothole to see if he could hear what they were talking about.

"Now that we've got hold of the girl, Horton, how much are you goin' to work her old man for?" said a voice that strongly resembled that of the stout crook, Coates.

"A good stiff figure, you may depend on, Coates. Both the mighty dollar as well as revenge for the close call we had of bein' sent to Auburn, are powerful arguments in the case. He'll be willin' to come up with a good many yellow-backed bills of large denomination when he realizes that he can't get his daughter back any other way," said Horton, striking a match and lighting a cigar.

Joe was nearly paralyzed with surprise on hearing the men address each other as Horton and Coates, which indicated that they were two of the three convicted burglars who had escaped from the train at the time of the accident near Salamanca.

The flash of the match attracted Joe's notice, and he put his eye to the knothole in order to see if he could catch a glimpse of either of the men's faces.

He hardly needed a sight of the men to convince him of the truth of his suspicions, but still it was just as well to make sure.

As he looked through the hole the light of the match showed him the familiar bearded countenance of Ike Horton within a few inches of his eye.

He could only catch an indistinct outline of Coates' face, but he was sure it was that rascal beyond doubt.

The match also revealed the features and form of Simpson, the thin crook, who had not as yet spoken, and who stood midway between the two.

"It was a neat job to kidnap her on the day after her



arrival in this town," spoke up Simpson. "There is the dickens to pay at the Walker house, I'll bet you, at her mysterious disappearance. Every cop in the city has her description by this time, and is on the lookout for her; but they'll never find her—not by a jugful."

"Find her!" ejaculated Horton. "I should say not. The roost of the Night Owls is a sealed book to the Buffalo police, and is likely to remain so. She is safe there for an indefinite stay, in Mother Jinks' care. When Fuller stumps up \$5,000 apiece for us, then we'll let her go; otherwise, she stays till he does."

Joe gave a gasp at those words.

Until that moment the identity of the girl those rascals were speaking about had no special interest for him.

Now it was different.

He saw that it was Banker Fuller's daughter Grace they had got into their hands, by some means not so far explained, and that discovery aroused him to a high pitch of excitement and indignation.

The men continued to talk about their plans for compelling Banker Fuller to ransom his daughter for the sum of \$15,000, and they figured out how it could be managed safely and expeditiously.

Finally Horton said:

"I'm goin' on to the roost now, to see how the girl is gettin' along. Mother Jinks may lay hands on her if she gives her trouble, and I don't want her hurt, for that might queer the whole business. Are you chaps comin'?"

Simpson and Coates said they were going to a certain saloon, and would be at the roost later.

"Well, you want to keep your weather optics liftin', because the cops all over the State are lookin' for us," warned Horton. "If you are nailed you'll go straight to Auburn, and that'll let you out of your share of the \$15,000. Then I'll have to get somebody else to help me put the game through."

Coates and Simpson started to cross the wide thoroughfare, while Horton walked off up the river.

On the spur of the moment Joe decided to desert his post and follow Horton in order to try and locate the rendezvous of the Night Owls.

So he quickly unlocked the small door in the fence, stepped outside, relocked it, and started to trail the indistinct figure of Horton to his destination.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### IN A BAD FIX.

It was not an easy matter for Joe to keep Horton in sight and at the same time keep that rascal in ignorance of the fact that he was being shadowed.

Horton led his tracker away from the lights and life of the district near Dock A and out along the river front, where houses were few, and hardly any human being was stirring.

The prospect grew more and more desolate as they proceeded, and finally Joe saw the shadowy form of a building gradually shape itself out of the gloom ahead.

It stood right at the river side.

In fact, it was partially on the river itself, the rear of the house, which was two stories and a half in height, and as disreputable a looking edifice as it has ever been the

lot of an architect to conceive, or a builder to erect, being supported by rows of piles, among which the dark water of the river flowed and eddied.

Horton walked up to the knobless door of this building, laid his hand on a certain part of the jamb, and pressed a spring.

The door opened inward, and the rascal disappeared from the view of the boy, who was some little distance behind him.

Joe hastened forward till he came to the door, and then he saw that there was no handle to it.

He pressed upon it, and found it as tight as wax.

"So this is the rendezvous of the Night Owls," he breathed. "It's a wonder the police have not spotted the place long ago and raided it. Well, there's not much chance of me getting inside of this building, even if I dared take the risk of entering, which I guess would be a foolish proceeding on my part. I'll take a good look at the house and its surroundings, and then I'll hasten away to find a police station. If the Buffalo officers know their business they ought to be able to put the Night Owls out of business between this and daylight."

As Joe was about to withdraw from the door it was suddenly and noiselessly opened, an arm was thrust out, he was seized by the collar with a grip of steel and pulled into an entry-way that was dark as pitch.

The door was shut as noiselessly as it had opened, and then a rough voice hissed in Joe's ear: "Who are you, and what were you followin' me for? I s'pose you didn't think I was on to you, eh? You've got some object, so spit it out, d'ye understand."

The plucky boy felt that he was in a tight fix.

His sudden capture was such a surprise to him that he was somewhat dazed, and could not open his mouth to save his life if he had wished to.

"So you won't speak. I reckon the detectives sent you out to try and do the work they failed at. Thought, maybe, because you was a boy that you might find out somethin'. Well, you'll find out somethin', I'll warrant. You'll find out what several of the detectives have already discovered—that this place is the short road to the next world. You've put your foot in it, young feller, this time. You'll never see daylight again. Dead men tell no tales, is our motto, and we always keep it before us."

Horton dragged the boy back along the entry till he came to a door, which he pushed open.

Then he shoved Joe into a perfectly bare room.

From a hook on the wall Horton took a strong cord that hung there, in readiness for just such an emergency, and bound the boy's hands behind his back, in spite of the vigorous resistance he put up.

Then he tied Joe's ankles together.

As soon as the brave lad was quite helpless Horton took from his pocket a small folding dark lantern.

Turning his back on the prisoner, the rascal opened out the lantern, struck a match, and lighted the wick of the little lamp inside.

Then he turned around and flashed the tiny bull's-eye light in Joe's face.

As the flash lighted up the boy's features Horton uttered a surprised imprecation.

He recognized the prisoner as William Benton's son, and



the boy who had been largely instrumental in foiling the burglarious attempt of himself and associates on Banker Fuller's house that eventful night, and whose evidence had secured their conviction, on which they had all been sentenced to a ten-year spell in Auburn.

"So it's you, is it?" roared the scoundrel, with another imprecation and a menacing flash of the eyes. "You who did us up in Corinth—you, the son of the man I hate more than any other person on this earth! Not satisfied with what you did to us, you have, in some way, got on our track again after we escaped from the train at the time of the smash-up, and you are tryin' to get us caught again. Do you want to know what your fate is? Listen! Do you hear the swish of the water under this floor? You will be tied to one of the spiles, with your head just below high-water mark. When the tide rises you will feel the hand of death grippin' at your heart. Inch by inch you will feel the cold, clammy water risin' up to your mouth. When it reaches your lips you will struggle in vain to evade its suffocatin' grasp. You will be slowly strangled to death. Your death agony will be prolonged by your frantic efforts to escape your fate. What do you think of it? Does the prospect please you? You might have escaped all this by mindin' your own business. Now you will pay the price of your folly, and to-morrow some one will find your body floatin' in the river, while the newspapers will print the story of another river mystery."

The rascal saw with satisfaction the effect produced on his prisoner by his words, and he gloated over it.

Although he hated the very name of Benton, he had never intended to go out of his way to injure Joe, as his revenge had been satisfied with the wreck of William Benton, and the consequent misery it had brought to the woman who had discarded him for the more successful suitor.

The boy, however, had butted in on him of his own free will; had done him and his pals a serious injury, and so Horton determined he should suffer well for his temerity.

The end of a red bandanna handkerchief protruding from the boy's jacket pocket caught Horton's eye.

He whisked it out and bound it around Joe's mouth, gagging him effectually.

Then he went to one of the sashless windows overlooking the river and flashed the bull's-eye down one of the spiles.

The tide was low, but still on the ebb.

He noticed the fact with some disappointment.

It would be some hours before the tide was up to high-water mark.

In fact, a couple of hours after sunrise.

It would not do to carry out his fiendish plan in the light of day, for there were many eyes along the river front at that hour.

He had the alternative of tying the boy down on the mud and letting the water slowly cover his face that way, which would answer the same purpose, so far as snuffing him out was concerned.

This could be carried out before sunrise.

Horton, however, didn't fancy it as much as the other way.

It was too quick in reaching results.

He wanted the boy to feel the approach of death for as long a time as possible.

That could only be effected by tying him upright to a

spile as soon as the tide began to rise, and then there would be at least four hours of torture before his victim.

So he decided to postpone Joe's death until after dark on the following night.

In the meantime he would remove him to the roost, where he felt that his prisoner would be perfectly safe until he was ready to lead him to execution.

"It's a good thing for you, young fellow, that the tide is on the ebb, instead of on the flow," he said, returning to the boy's side. "It will give you twenty hours or so of life that otherwise you'd miss. The pleasure I shall take in witnessin' your takin' off will, therefore, be deferred till after dark to-night, for it wants only two hours of sunrise now. Don't fool yourself with the idea that this will give you a chance to escape. I'm going to take you to a place where you'll be safe, I warrant you, until I'm ready to dispatch you on your long journey."

Thus speaking, Horton raised the helpless boy in his arms, carried him out of the room, down a slimy pair of wooden stairs to the watery tract under the building, and then around a closely knit line of spiles sunk into the mud.

Pausing before what seemed to be a mass of solid rock on which the building partly rested, Horton pressed a concealed spring.

A portion of the rock swung inward, disclosing a subterranean passage.

Horton stepped inside, dragged in his burden, and closed the entrance.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE ROOST OF THE "NIGHT OWLS."

Horton didn't seem to consider a light necessary in that dark passage.

He knew every foot of the way as well as if the place was lighted by electricity.

Dragging Joe along, he advanced about a dozen feet, until their progress was barred by what seemed to be a dead wall.

Horton felt along the stone until his fingers rested on a small knob.

Pushing this several times, he waited.

In a few minutes a concealed door opened in the wall, and the figure of a repulsive-looking woman appeared in the opening, with a flaring oil lamp in her hand.

She flashed the light in Horton's face and then, without a word, made way for him to pass with his burden.

He entered a roughly finished underground room, and deposited his prisoner on the ground.

The woman, after closing the door and putting two heavy bars across it, came forward and placed the lamp upon a plain deal table in the center of the room.

Joe's eyes roved around the apartment.

Besides the table, he saw that it was furnished with perhaps a dozen stools, a stove, whose chimney disappeared through the roof, a rude kind of dresser filled with crockeryware, some shelving occupied by odds and ends, and a stout iron-bound chest.

There was a door leading into a room or passage beyond.



The woman seemed to have been the only occupant of the place until their arrival.

She had evidently been entertaining herself with a black bottle and a glass, both of which stood on the table.

There was a fire in the stove, on top of which stood a kettle, and a pot from which issued the aroma of coffee, while the partly open oven door revealed the presence of a couple of platters containing some kind of food, which was being kept warm there.

"Have you caught another spy, Ike?" asked the woman, glancing at Joe with a wicked eye. "It's a boy!" she added, in some surprise.

"An emissary of the cops who shadowed me to the house. I caught him, and here he is," replied Horton, carelessly.

"Does he go the road?" asked the woman.

"What else, since I've introduced him to the roost? That, if nothing else, would seal his fate, since he who is not one of us that passes yon door leaves hope behind."

"Aye, so he does," replied the woman, with an ugly laugh. "The girl is the only exception, if her friends come to snuff."

"She was brought here drugged, and drugged she will go away, if at all. Having no knowledge of where she is, or how she got here, she cannot possibly betray our hiding place."

"Right," chuckled the woman, showing a hideous mouthful of yellow and decayed teeth.

At that moment a bell jingled in the room several times in a peculiar way.

"There's some of the Owls," remarked Horton.

Mother Jinks took up the lamp and went to the door, which she unbarred and opened.

Two hard-looking men of perhaps twenty-five years entered.

Each carried a bag filled with something, which he laid upon the table.

Then they glanced inquiringly at the bound and gagged form of Joe.

"Another detective?" asked one of them, with an ugly look.

"Not quite, but on the same lay," replied Horton. "He shadowed me to the house here, and I collared him. He's a chap who spoiled a good plant for me, Coates, and Simpson, a while ago, and got us jugged. We escaped a ten-year term by the skin of our teeth, and now me and my pals are goin' to square the account with him. He goes the road—you know what that means."

They seemed to comprehend his meaning, for they laughed in a wicked way, and then drew stools up alongside the table.

"Jimmy and me have had great luck," said one of them. "We've boned a bunch of swag that's worth a small fortune."

The bags were emptied on the table, and their contents proved to be a valuable collection of diamond jewelry worth many thousands of dollars.

The two crooks explained how they had entered a certain house in the swellest street in Buffalo, and had gone through the safe they found embedded in the wall, with most satisfactory results.

After the plunder had been sized up, and favorably commented on by Horton, it was restored to the bags, and the

bags handed over to Mother Jinks, to put away in the strong chest, of which she kept the key, and was responsible for the property to the gang.

Joe Benton, in spite of the seriousness of his position, noted all that went on under his eyes with not a little curiosity.

Although his fate appeared to be sealed, he did not give up all hope that something might happen yet to save him from the cruel death Horton had mapped out for him when darkness once more shrouded the earth.

The very fact that the scoundrel had felt obliged to postpone his death for a number of hours was of itself encouraging.

At any rate, that's the way the boy looked at it.

He wondered in what part of this underground roost Grace Fuller was held a prisoner, pending the application to her father for her ransom.

He knew from the fact that there was a door at the end of the room that there must be other sections, or apartments, to the crib.

It was beyond that door, if anywhere, Grace was confined.

When the plunder had been disposed of the two crooks called for something to eat and drink, and the woman immediately placed knives, forks, plates, and cups before them, and produced from the oven a leg of lamb, roasted to a turn, with baked potatoes and other incidentals.

From the dresser she brought out bread and sundry other things.

Lastly she poured out coffee for them.

Horton showed no desire to eat, nor did Mother Jinks offer him anything in that line.

At his request, however, she brought out a bottle of whiskey and a tumbler.

He poured out a liberal allowance of the spirits, then called for some hot water.

The woman took the kettle off the stove and supplied him with all he wanted.

In this way he prepared himself a hot toddy, which he sweetened with sugar, and drank off with much satisfaction.

Other members of the Night Owls dropped in, and finally Coates and Simpson appeared.

To the latter pair Horton explained who Joe was, and how he had caught him.

The two rascals were delighted that the boy, to whom they owed such a strong grudge, had fallen into their hands, and they expressed the pleasure they would feel to be present that night, when he was given his quietus among the spiles outside, at high water.

It was now about sunrise, and all hands, except Mother Jinks, who retired to the region beyond the door, turned in on mattresses that were taken from a corner where they had been piled up.

No attention whatever was paid to Joe, who was allowed to sleep on the hard ground, or stay awake, as he chose.

In a short time the boy was the only one in the room who was not snoring away to beat the band.

The desperate situation in which he was placed drove all thoughts of slumber from his eyes, and though his body was weary his brain was active and wide awake.



The more he thought over the situation the less chance he saw of any escape from the fate that confronted him.

"I'm afraid it's all up with me this trip," he breathed. "That rascal, Horton, seems to have me dead to rights, and I can expect as little mercy from him as I might from a famished tiger that had me in his grasp. Poor Grace, too, must feel terribly unhappy over her unfortunate plight. I wish I could help her outwit her abductors, even if I couldn't escape my own hard lot; but that's out of the question as matters stand. We're both up against it hard, especially me, and at the present moment I don't see the ghost of a chance to give my enemies the slip."

The hours slipped away slower than thick molasses, and at length, overcome by the closeness and heat of the room, as well as by fatigue, the boy gradually sank into a troubled slumber that lasted well into the afternoon.

## CHAPTER XV.

### ON THE THRESHOLD OF FREEDOM.

When he opened his eyes once more on the room, and gathered his bewildered senses together, he found that all the Owls, including Horton, had left the roost.

The sole occupant of the room was Mother Jinks, and she lay bent, with her arms sprawled on the table, snoring loudly, with the black bottle and a half-filled glass of gin before her.

Joe could only see her hunched-up shoulders on the table, and her extended feet under it, from his position on the floor, but he could hear her nasal appendage tooting away like a circus calliope, and he judged that it would take some noise above the ordinary to arouse her.

The boy saw no good reason why he should remain lying on the ground when he could sit up, so he changed his position, and was thereby enabled to see the head and a part of the face of Mother Jinks.

If the old woman had no beauty, she had lots of carmine-tinted hair, which she usually kept tied up in a kind of Grecian knot on the top of her head.

At present, however, the knot had come loose, and her hair fell like a red waterfall over her closed eyes and open mouth.

After gazing a few moments at the female guardian of the roost, Joe became conscious that he was uncommonly hungry.

This sensation became more acute when his eyes rested on the remains of the cold leg of lamb and a portion of a loaf of bread on the table.

In spite of the fact that his span of life had been measured off by Horton, and his chance of dying by drowning that night was good, Joe yearned for some of that meat and bread.

Bound hand and foot, he seemed to have a small chance of getting any.

The desire to appease his hunger was so strong that he began to try to get his hands loose.

To his surprise, he succeeded in freeing his hands from the cord after a few tugs.

It was then but the work of a moment for him to pull out his knife and cut the cord holding his ankles together.

The next thing he did was to swoop down on the meat and bread.

Cutting off a few hunks of the lamb he ate them.

He cleaned the bread plate, and almost finished the meat, before he was satisfied.

Then, after washing the food down with a dipper of water, he recalled the desperate position in which he stood, and began to think of his own safety.

And as he thought of himself he also thought of Grace.

He determined to see where she was confined in the roost.

With this purpose in view, he opened the door at the end of the room and entered another room behind, where he found a bed and articles of coarse female attire that he knew belonged to Mother Jinks.

Evidently these were her quarters.

Another door caught his eye.

He turned the handle and found the door fast.

It struck him that the banker's daughter was a prisoner in the room beyond.

As he was considering the matter he saw a small bunch of keys hanging from the lock.

Turning the big one which was inserted in the lock, he opened the door and looked inside the room.

A lighted lamp stood on a box, and revealed one other box in the place and a double mattress in the corner, on which was stretched a girlish form, fully dressed, with her face buried in her arms.

Joe advanced into the room and glanced down at the pathetic-looking figure.

Although he could not see her face, he felt sure in his heart it was Miss Fuller.

"Grace," he said softly, kneeling down and catching her by the arm.

The girl sprang into a sitting posture, as if touched by a galvanic shock, and looked in a startled way into his face.

"Grace," he said again, "don't you know me?"

"Joe Benton!" she gasped.

"Yes, I am Joe Benton, and I am here to rescue you, if I can."

"Oh, Joe! Joe! I am so unhappy!" she cried, bursting into a flood of tears.

"There, there! Brace up, Grace! I will try to get you out of here."

He put his arm reassuringly around her waist, and she, in the excess of her feelings, threw her arms around his neck, and pressed her tear-wet face to his.

"Oh, take me away from here, Joe! Take me away—and I will love you for ever and ever!"

"Come, then. We will go at once, if we can get out of this underground coop. There is no one outside in the room but the old woman, and she is asleep. If we can pass the doors we shall be safe. If we can't, I will die fighting in your defence. I have a revolver, which the rascals failed to take from me. They did not search me, for some reason. There are six bullets in it, and I shall shoot to kill, for it's your safety and my life against theirs."

He led the trembling girl out through Mother Jinks' room into the outer apartment, and up to the door of the passage, which he unlocked, for the key was in the lock, and then unbarred.

Taking the lamp from the table to light their way, they walked through the passage till they came to the outer



entrance, the one closed by the rock and worked by a spring only.

Here Joe found himself at fault, for he could not open the rocky door.

The spring arrangement he was not acquainted with.

After fumbling all over the face of the rock for some handle or knob which did not appear to be there, the boy began to realize that their escape was blocked on the very threshold of liberty.

To be found there by some of the returning Owls was to invite almost certain recapture, though Joe was resolved that more than one of his enemies would precede him into the next world.

"Can't you find the way out, Joe?" asked Grace, anxiously.

"The exit is right before us," replied the boy. "It's a big stone that works inward on hinges, I should judge. It fits so closely that I can't even see a crack to show its boundaries. It must be held by a spring, which is released by a push-button of some kind. Blessed if I can see anything like a button or knob anywhere around it."

He flashed the light of the lamp all over the face of the rock without result.

The push-button seemed so well concealed that he couldn't see it.

As a matter of fact, no effort had been made to conceal the button on the inside of the entrance to the roost, but it wasn't located where a stranger would naturally look for it, and that was why Joe did not discover it.

While Joe was gazing at the rock in great perplexity, and Grace was standing behind him, in a state of anxious suspense, the door suddenly and noiselessly opened before their eyes, and the opening was filled by Horton, with Coates and Simpson right behind him.

It would be hard to say which party was the most surprised—Horton and his pals, on seeing their prisoner free, and in the act of trying to escape from the roost with their girl captive, or Joe and Grace, on being so unexpectedly confronted by their enemies.

For a moment both sides stood spellbound; then Grace uttered a scream and Horton a terrible imprecation.

He rushed forward to seize the boy.

At the same moment Joe recovered his presence of mind, and reaching for the revolver in his hip pocket, he drew the weapon, aimed it at Horton, and fired point blank.

The boy knew that the case was too desperate for any parley with the rascals.

It was simply his life or theirs.

Horton clapped his hand to his breast and sank on the ground with a groan.

As Coates and Simpson started back aghast at this unexpected denouement, Joe fired at the stout crook, with equally deadly effect.

Indeed, it was impossible for the boy to miss his aim at that close range.

Coates uttered a cry, and fell against the rocky door, his body keeping it open.

As Joe started to draw a bead on Simpson, that slippery rascal turned and ran.

Joe did not mean that he should escape and bring down other Owls on him and Grace, so he stepped over Coates and fired at the retreating rascal.

The bullet struck his leg, and he went down into the mud and water among the spiles with a splash.

Calling to Grace to follow him, Joe dashed out to capture the agile crook.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### CONCLUSION.

Simpson struggled to his feet, only to sink down again, for his leg doubled under him, and extracted from him a groan of agony.

Joe seized him without regard to his injury, and dragged him behind the inner row of spiles.

The pain of his wounded leg caused the rascal to faint.

The plucky boy was, therefore, master of the situation.

He wondered if the shots had attracted notice in the neighborhood and would bring persons down there to investigate.

The tide was pretty well up, and the stairs leading up into the building were covered to a height of three or four feet.

Joe saw, however, that the three rascals had come to the roost by boat instead of through the house.

The boat was tied to a spile a few feet away.

He hastily lifted Grace into the boat, and was about to follow, when he thought about the valuable booty the two Owls had brought in early that morning, and which he had seen Mother Jinks take charge of and lock in the chest.

Joe decided that it was his duty to try and recover the swag, in the interest of the persons from whom it had been stolen, lest some returning Owl should take alarm at the condition of things before he could bring the police there, and remove the plunder to some other place.

Not wishing to leave Grace at the mercy of any rascal who might happen to turn up while he was inside, and yet wishing to retain the revolver for his own protection, Joe examined the pockets of the insensible ruffians for a weapon of some kind.

Horton and Coates each had a revolver in their hip pockets, and the boy took charge of them and handed them to Grace.

He found an ugly-looking knife in Simpson's pocket, and he tossed it into the water.

"Now you wait here till I get back, Grace," he said. "If any of the rascals should appear, shoot at them. In that case I'm bound to hear the shots, and I'll be out in a jiffy."

"Why are you going back, Joe?" she asked, not liking the idea of it.

"I've got to get something. I won't be gone but a few minutes."

Thus speaking, Joe ran back into the passage and made his way to the room where the old woman was still snoring at the table.

"I wonder if she's got the key of that chest on her person?" muttered the boy, as he looked at her. "Maybe it's one of those on the bunch in the door of the room where Grace was confined."

He rushed back into the room beyond, seized the bunch of keys, returned, and tried one that looked as if it fitted the lock of the chest.

It fitted all right, and he pushed up the cover.



The two bags of plunder were within easy reach.

He took them out, and then noticed that there were several other bags full of stuff, which he guessed was stolen property.

He took them out and carried all the bags outside and placed them in the boat.

Then he dragged the three rascals inside of the passage and let the rock close almost to, keeping it on a small crack with a piece of wood.

There being nothing further to detain him, he got aboard the boat, pushed out from under the spiles, and rowed down the river toward Dock A.

On the way Grace told him that she had come to Buffalo on a visit to her friend, Sadie Walker, daughter of the senior member of the shipping firm with whom Joe had secured employment.

She had reached the city in the morning, and in the afternoon had gone out walking with Sadie in one of the parks not far from her friend's home.

They wandered into a secluded part of the park, and suddenly found themselves in the presence of three men, whom Grace recognized as Horton, Coates, and Simpson.

The recognition was mutual, and the men seized them both.

Handkerchiefs were pressed over their faces, and both girls fainted.

When Grace came to her senses she found herself in the room from which Joe had rescued her.

How or when she was brought there she had not the least idea.

Joe then told the girl his story, and by the time he had finished the boat was close to Dock A.

As he hauled the boat up to a narrow flight of water-stairs alongside the dock he was seen and recognized by Adams, the day man.

"Why, where have you been?" asked Adams, in surprise. "You were gone when I got here to relieve you this morning."

"I can't tell you now," said Joe, assisting Grace on to the dock. "I've got to telephone Mr. Walker about this young lady, who is visiting at his house. I've also got to telephone the police, for I've discovered the roost of the Night Owls!"

"What!" exclaimed Adams. "You've discovered the roost of the Night Owls?"

"Yes. There is some of their plunder in the boat. Help me bring those bags into the office, so that the police can take charge of it when they arrive."

Joe telephoned the nearest police station first, and what he said over the wire brought a posse of officers in a hurry to Dock A.

Before they arrived Joe had communicated with Mr. Walker, and told him that Grace Fuller was safe, and to send a carriage to the dock for her.

He also detailed the experiences which he had gone through, and how he had discovered the rendezvous of the notorious Night Owls, and was now waiting for the police to come in order to guide them to the place and make prisoners of the old woman and the three crooks he had shot.

When the officers arrived, in a wagon, Joe was ready to go with them to the old building.

The tide was low when they got there, and so Joe had

no trouble in taking them down among the spiles and showing them the entrance to the passage, which was just as he and Grace had left it.

Horton and his pals were still lying in the passage, and were handcuffed and put aboard the wagon with Mother Jinks.

The roost was thoroughly examined, and both of the doors put out of business.

No plunder, other than what Joe brought to Dock A, was found, and the police took charge of that.

Its value was found to be over \$150,000, and Joe subsequently received the several rewards offered for its recovery, amounting in all to \$20,000.

A reward of \$5,000 had been offered by the city for information leading to the discovery of the roost of the Night Owls and their extermination, and Joe got that also, besides being greatly praised in the newspapers.

Horton and Coates recovered from their wounds, and, with Simpson, were sent to Auburn in due time to work out their ten-year sentences.

Joe, as a matter of course, received the grateful thanks of Banker Fuller and his wife for having rescued Grace from her terrible situation, and as the boy had saved him from being held up for a \$15,000 ransom, the banker insisted on presenting Joe with a nest-egg for his future of \$5,000.

Mr. Walker got a new night watchman for Dock A, as he didn't think it safe for Joe to continue the job after his exploit against the Night Owls, for there was no saying what the uncaptured members of the gang and their friends might do to the boy if they had an easy chance to seek vengeance on him.

Soon after this exploit, Joe learned that his father, after being tried and acquitted of the charge of incendiarism, had been taken ill and sent to a hospital, where he died, a wreck of his former self.

The shipper gave Joe a good berth in his office, and the lad, in time, worked his way up to a responsible position in the house.

Long before that time he became engaged to Grace Fuller, with her parents' consent, and when he married her the poor boy's fight for fortune had been won.

## THE END.

Read "A TIP WORTH A MILLION; OR, HOW A BOY WORKED IT IN WALL STREET," which will be the next number (140) of "Fame and Fortune Weekly."

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## GOOD STORIES.

The Cape-to-Cairo Railroad now extends northward from Capetown a distance of 2,100 miles, a regular train service being operated over the road. While it has not yet begun to show any profits, traffic is increasing, some 3,000 tons of zinc ore alone being handled monthly. It is stated that during the current year large amounts of rolling stock and equipment will be ordered, as also will a great deal of building material for the extension of the line northward.

Among the historical curiosities to be seen at Chatsworth House, the residence of the Duke of Devonshire, is a willow tree that weeps, very often to the personal discomfort of those beneath it. To the casual observer, it appears just an ordinary willow, but on closer inspection it is seen to be artfully artificial. It is made from a metal to closely resemble a living tree, and each of its branches is covered with innumerable holes. In fact, the whole tree is a monster syringe, being connected to a water main near by. The key for turning on and off is close at hand, and many a visiting party has been enticed beneath its branches by practical jokers.

One hundred inches, or, in round numbers, eight feet, is the astounding diameter of what will be the greatest telescope in the world. It will be an American instrument, and is to be erected on the summit of Mount Wilson, in Southern California, as soon as it can be constructed. This remarkable telescope has been carefully planned, and funds for its construction have been provided by the generosity of John D. Hooker, of Los Angeles, who, so far as is known, is the first man to co-operate with Mr. Carnegie in the latter's efforts for the advancement of science. This telescope will enable us to penetrate seven times further into space than can now be done with the greatest visual telescopes. Its cost will be about one-twentieth of that of a modern battleship.

Scientists have given the temperature which one would feel when penetrating to the center of the globe. To obtain this estimate of heat they had to confine themselves to simple observations on the rise of temperature in mine shafts. Geologists believed that the mean temperature of the earth increased by one degree with every hundred feet of descent. With these figures for a basis, they calculated that the mean heat of the central nucleus must be forty-three hundred and twenty degrees Fahrenheit. This was good mathematics, but incorrect, for observations made in Nevada with instruments of great precision showed that the heat of the central nucleus was much greater. For the experiment in 1897 a silver mine was selected, and there they found that at twenty-five hundred feet under the earth's surface the air showed a temperature of ninety-four degrees Fahrenheit, and the water of one hundred and twenty degrees. In the vicinity, at Yellow Jack

shaft, the mine reaches a depth of three thousand feet, and the thermometer shows constantly one hundred and thirty-nine degrees Fahrenheit, so that miners cannot work there for more than fifteen minutes at a stretch. The works in the Simplon showed, likewise, an uncommon subterranean heat, and the calculations justify an assumption for the central nucleus of a temperature of six hundred and eighty thousand to seven hundred thousand degrees, the same as is, assumed of the sun.

The enormous feminine demand for artificial coils and toupees is leading to a famine in human hair. Formerly, Swiss, German, and Hungarian girls supplied the world of fashionable women with luxuriant tresses of all tints; but the governments of many countries are now making it illegal for a girl to sell her hair, or for an agent to buy it. The supply, in consequence, is running short, and the prices of real hair are trebling. A series of successful experiments point to spun glass as the most effective substitute for human hair. Wigs made from spun glass are wonderfully light and fine, and the texture soft and beautiful. It is easy to produce any shade desired, while curls and waves can be manufactured at will to suit the fashion of the moment. The imitation is so realistic and true to life that it is impossible to detect the difference between it and real hair grown on the head.

## JOKES AND JESTS.

"Ever try an automobile, Judge?" asked a friend. "No," replied the judge, "but I've tried a lot of people who have."

Him—Won't you give me just one kiss? Her—Yes; I'll give you one if you'll promise not to ask for another. Him—When you have had the first one you'll do the asking.

"Well," said Citiman, "I guess you fellows in the suburbs are pleased to have the chance to run around in the fresh air these mornings." "Run around!" snorted Subbubs. "Huh! Most of our running is right straight through the fresh air to the station."

Ellen (the nurse, to little girl of six, who is supposed to have an afternoon sleep every day)—Nancy, you are a naughty little girl, not to have gone to sleep this afternoon! Nancy (reproachfully)—Ellen! Ellen! Don't you remember the three times you looked over the screen, and I was fast asleep?

At a party recently they were playing a game which consisted in everybody in the room making a face, and the one who made the worst face was awarded a prize. They all did their level best, and then a gentleman went up to one of the ladies and said: "Well, madam, I think you have won the prize." "Oh!" she said, "I wasn't playing!"

Teacher—Your composition is very good, my dear, but I don't understand the title you have given to it. Why "Afterward?" That name has nothing to do with it. Small Scholar—You told us to. Teacher—I told you to! I never saw it before! Small Scholar—Yes, ma'am; you said we must write a description of our Saturday, and name it afterward!

On the last visit of Joaquin Miller, the poet of the Sierras, to San Francisco, he was one of the guests at a rather formal dinner at a friend's house, where he stayed overnight. His hostess had known the poet since her childhood, so she felt privileged, next morning, to discourse to him of the beauties of the Parisian gown she had worn the night before—beauties which seemed to have escaped his observation. Mr. Miller listened to all that she had to say, and remained silent. "But didn't you really like the dress?" pleaded the lady. "Well," replied the poet, "I did like part of it well enough." The lady brightened. "Indeed?" she said. "What part?" "The part you had on," answered the poet; and that ended the discussion.



## A CLEVER DECEPTION

By D. W. Stevens.

Old John Morgan, the noted banker, was, one day not long ago, waited upon in his office by a brother banker, who received a cordial welcome.

"What can I do for you?" inquired Mr. Morgan, after requesting his visitors to be seated, for the caller was accompanied by his son.

The reply was given in a low tone:

"Within an hour past I have heard of a lot of government bonds that can be bought below the market a trifle, sufficiently so to clear a few thousand. I shall want some assistance in making the purchase, and have come to you to ask if you will go into a pool with me?"

"Where are these bonds?"

"In possession of an estate. I cannot give you full particulars at this moment, and you will have to trust to me to carry the deal through. Indeed, I cannot say for sure that I can get hold of the bonds at all, although I believe I can."

"How much money do you require?"

"I have a hundred and fifty thousand of my own that I can put my hands on, and I want sixty thousand in addition, for which I am willing to return a pro rata of the profits in the transaction."

"Very well, Mr. Davis. Call on me for the sixty thousand, if you find you need it. Just send your check for the sum dated two or three days ahead for it."

"It must be in cash," said Mr. Davis.

"Very well. I will have the sum here in cash."

"And my son here will call for it in person if I need it."

Mr. Morgan bowed and took a look at the young man.

Father and son rose, bowed, and left Mr. Morgan's office.

A couple of hours passed. It was drawing near to the hour of three when the handle of the door leading to Mr. Morgan's private office was turned. A young man at once entered. He might have been near thirty, was well dressed, with an affectation of the English style, wore a white stand-up collar meeting close in front of the throat, and carried a cane. His hair was smoothly combed, and his mustache was well kept. This person moved across to Mr. Morgan's desk, and, holding cane and hat in one hand, he rested the other on the desk, and, as Mr. Morgan turned, said:

"Father sent me for the sixty thousand."

"Ah! Mr. Davis?"

"Yes, sir," was the quiet rejoinder.

"I didn't know your father had a son as old as yourself."

"He was married, and a father, at my present age," was the reply. "May I request that you keep me waiting as little as possible, Mr. Morgan?"

"Certainly. The money is in the safe."

A tap of a bell on Mr. Morgan's desk called a clerk from the outer office.

"That special package in the safe," he said, and the clerk bowed and withdrew.

Turning to his visitor, Mr. Morgan said:

"I presume Mr. Davis sent his check for the sum, as agreed?"

The young man gave a start, whether of surprise, or anger at his forgetfulness, was not to be determined just then. He bit his lip.

"No, sir," he said, "he did not send it. It must have been forgotten in his haste. Let me see—I can sign a check for you, though, for I have a power of attorney, unless you will accept my word for it that a check shall be sent as soon as I reach the office."

"Well! well!" and Mr. Morgan's tone showed that he was annoyed at what he considered inexcusable carelessness. "Give me a receipt for the money and send me a check as soon as you reach the office."

The young man wrote a receipt, was handed a package Mr. Morgan informed him contained sixty thousand dollars, and hastily left the office.

An hour passed. Again Mr. Morgan's private office was entered.

"Father has sent me for the sixty thousand, and here's his check, dated three days ahead. He has succeeded in making the deal."

Mr. Morgan stared at the speaker.

"What do you mean?" he said. "You were here only a short time ago and got the money."

"I?"

"Yes, you!"

"Impossible!"

"Why, man, I gave it to you myself, and there's the receipt you signed for it, saying the check had been forgotten."

The young man looked at the receipt with wondering face. Then he slowly said:

"There has been crooked work here, somehow, Mr. Morgan. I haven't been inside this office since I was here with my father, and I never signed that receipt."

Mr. Morgan stared at the young man in a belligerent way, and one might easily have guessed that the thought in his mind was that he would like to thrash him for lying and trying thus to rob him of sixty thousand dollars.

Young Davis said earnestly:

"I am telling you the truth. You have been imposed upon by somebody, Mr. Morgan!"

The banker surveyed the young man carefully. At last he slowly shook his head.

"It is impossible," he said, "that any two human beings can so closely resemble each other. Why, you are as alike as two peas in a pod, coats, hats, canes, and all."

"Still, I pledge you my word that this is the first time I have been inside this office since I left with my father."

Young Davis spoke earnestly, and his words bore the impress of truth. Mr. Morgan was nonplussed. He summoned a clerk by a tap of the bell, and a few minutes later I was hastening from headquarters to Wall Street, in response to a summons directing a call at the office of John Morgan, banker.

The facts of the case were soon in my hands. Being alone with Mr. Morgan for a minute, he earnestly asked me:

"Do you think it possible that I may have been deceived? Is it possible that one man could so disguise himself as to resemble another?"

"It is possible," I answered him.

"You think, then, that I do young Davis an injustice in suspecting him of having made two visits to this office?"

"I do, sir. Yet I would not be surprised to have it proved that your suspicion was founded on absolute truth. The ramifications of crime are many and various and wonderful."

"Do you think there is any chance of getting at the bottom of this affair?"

"I can better answer that question a little later. By the way,

in that package of sixty thousand dollars was there any series of bills or any marked or peculiar bills that could be identified?"

"Not that I am aware of."

"Then, sir, I realize thoroughly that I have a hard case before me, one of those cases where the solving is more a matter of good fortune than good judgment. Still, I intend to do the best I can."

I left Mr. Morgan's office in a brown study. Many peculiar cases had come under my observation, but none containing this element of one person, in broad daylight, personating another and succeeding in getting away with sixty thousand dollars of the money of a banker reputed to be one of the best business men in the city, and, withal, exceedingly careful.

As I walked slowly along I pondered the case. If young Davis had been personated who could have done it? Somebody who was intimate with him, was the reply. A strong reason why this appeared truthful was in the fact that nobody save a person standing in close relation to Mr. Davis and his son could have learned of his proposed purchase of the government bonds, and known of the elder gentleman's going to Mr. Morgan for sixty thousand dollars.

It being after banking hours, I could do little or nothing until the next day.

But that night I watched the residence of Mr. Davis, and shortly after eight saw his son emerge.

He sauntered in the direction of Broadway, and finally en-



tered a well-known and sumptuously furnished billiard-room. I followed him. Here I saw him meet a young and well-dressed man, with whom he shortly engaged in a game of nine-pins.

As I stood at a little distance, watching them, it struck me that the two were about of a size, both dark complexioned, and bearing a strong family resemblance. The greatest point of dissimilarity was that young Davis had a well-kept mustache, while the other's upper lip was shaved clean.

Later in the evening I sauntered nearer, and heard Joe Davis address the other young man as Harry Brewer.

The next morning, promptly at ten o'clock, I presented myself at the office of Mr. Davis and inquired for him.

"He will not be here for half an hour yet," was the reply. "Will you not wait for him?"

"Yes."

I noticed that Harry Brewer was in the inner office, talking with Joe Davis. The conversation was about the singular deception by which Mr. Morgan had been wheedled out of sixty thousand dollars.

At the rear of the business office were two private rooms, separated by a partition scarce more than six feet high. In one of these I was waiting to see Mr. Davis. The two young men were in the other, talking about the deception.

Harry Brewer asked:

"Where were you at the time this took place?"

"I was upstairs in the office of Parsons & Earley. I did not leave there until father sent for me. I then put on my hat and coat and hurried around to his office."

"Morgan says the fellow wore a coat like yours—even carried a similar cane, you told me."

"Yes."

"That's very singular."

"Mightily so. Do you know, after getting home last night, an idea struck me that there may be some meat in. Somebody may have been shown into the private office, put on my coat, hat, and taken my cane, and gone out by the private entrance in the rear. There was a pass-key to the rear in my coat pocket, and the fellow might easily have brought my coat back—you see, it needn't have taken him ten minutes from the time of leaving here until the time of getting back."

"That can't be the case," I heard Harry Brewer say. "I am positive of that, for I was myself in these rooms during the time you were upstairs with Parsons & Earley. In fact, your father found me here on his coming back, and I went out just as he sent after you."

I caught my breath.

I felt I had struck a clew.

Passing from the office, I told the clerk that I would be back shortly, and then went direct to the office of Parsons & Earley, in the same building.

I saw Mr. Earley, and pledging him to secrecy, I then asked: "Can you tell me anything of a young man named Brewer?"

"Harry Brewer?"

"The same. You know him?"

"Yes. He is a nephew of Mr. Davis. He worked for a while for us."

"What is he doing now?"

"Nothing, I think."

"Why did you and he part company?"

"Well, sir, in confidence, I will say that we had reason to suspect that he had not always dealt honorably by us, although he had so successfully covered his tracks that we could prove nothing against him through his accounts."

"Why doesn't Mr. Davis employ him?"

"For no other reason, I think, than that he lacks confidence in him."

"But he roams about Mr. Davis' office at pleasure."

"Because Mr. Davis is too kind-hearted to kick him out, I take it."

This was a not over good recommendation for Brewer. Did it warrant me in taking a decided step?

The sum of my reflections was that I must watch Brewer. This I began doing at once. In an interview with Mr. Davis, later in the day, I learned that Brewer had been practically supported by him for some time past, and that he might easily

have overheard certain conversation with his son after their return from Mr. Morgan's office.

Hence, when I ascertained that Brewer had a large sum of money in his possession I did not hesitate to place him under arrest. He was remarkably cool, and laughed scornfully when I charged him with the robbery of Mr. Morgan.

"Very well," said I, grimly, "we'll see how the thing comes out. I want you to pay that gentleman a visit in my company."

We went to Mr. Morgan's office. Before entering his private office I had a clerk send for Joe Davis, saying that Mr. Morgan was desirous of seeing him.

When Joe Davis arrived I forced Brewer to permit my fastening on his upper lip a false mustache, a counterpart of the genuine one growing on his cousin's lip. He did not wish to wear it in the slightest, but a revolver proved to be a persuader that he could not withstand.

I had Joe Davis remove his overcoat, and leave his hat and cane in the outer office.

Then, accompanied by both, I threw open Mr. Morgan's private door, and, entering, said:

"Mr. Morgan, will you be kind enough to tell me to which of these two persons you gave the package containing sixty thousand dollars?"

For a space the shrewd old banker was nonplussed. Then he began a deliberate and careful study of the faces of both. At last he said, in a tone of firm conviction:

"I gave the package to this one!"

He pointed at Brewer.

The latter protested vehemently that it was not so.

"Let me see the—the—a certain paper," I said to Mr. Morgan.

He understood what I wanted, and produced the receipt.

I showed a few words to Joe Davis.

"Have you ever seen that writing before?"

"Yes. It is that of Brewer there!"

We had him fast. He saw that the game was up, and admitted the truth. He had taken Joe's coat and hat and cane, and slipping secretly out by the back way, had come to Mr. Morgan's office, obtained the sixty thousand dollars, and returning, had successfully returned the borrowed articles before the entrance of his uncle.

The young villain had disposed of fifty-nine thousand dollars of the money in a secret place, and, with a sharpness worthy of a better cause, refused to reveal its hiding place unless Mr. Morgan would agree not to press a charge against him. This the banker agreed to rather than lose his money, so the young rascal escaped punishment for the crime.

But the story got out, his reputation was blasted, and nobody would trust him or have any transactions with him. The result of this was to drive him to crime, and a couple of years later I snapped him up for forgery, and he was sent up to Sing Sing for ten years.

A famous scientist, whose early home had been in a country district, had long promised to visit the scenes of his boyhood and deliver a lecture in aid of the funds of one of the institutions of the place. At last he fulfilled his promise, and the lecture was given. When, at the close of his lecture, he was conversing with some of the principal promoters of the affair, they warmly congratulated him on the facility with which he made rather technical matter interesting and clear to his uncultured audience. "Oh," said he, by way of explanation, "I invariably fix my attention upon that member of my audience who strikes me as having the least intelligent face, and I continue to explain any subject upon which I touch until I see by that person's expression that he understands it." Almost directly afterward the leading public official of the little town came into the room and made his way to where the scientist was standing. "Sir," he exclaimed, "you cannot possibly believe how much real pleasure you have given me to-night. It seemed to me all the time as if your eye was never away from me, that you spoke to me alone, and that your whole wish was to make me understand every word you said."



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